GOING TO CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

WHO GOES WHERE?

WHO DOESN'T CARE?

PETER KALDOR

'If this work is taken seriously it would turn the way we engage in mission in this country upside down. We need to throw away our traditional approach to mission which is based on a village mentality and grapple with the needs of urban Australia. This survey and this book propel us to a new approach.'

Dr David Penman
Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne

'This book makes an excellent contribution to church planning and raises many issues for those involved in ministry. It is a resource that should be of value for years to come.'

The Most Reverend Edward Clancy
Catholic Archbishop of Sydney

'In reading this book people will find themselves asking many questions about their own churches' life and ministry. Some of the patterns revealed are expected, others quite surprising. The missionary frontiers in Australia are now clearly evident. Whilst challenging and difficult, none are impossible to overcome.'

Dean Drayton, General Secretary
Board of Mission, Uniting Church

'Church reports tend to be of two kinds: those which *gather dust* and those which *light fires*. This work deserves to be in the latter category. The study provides resource material that marketing companies would pay tens of thousands of dollars to obtain. Church leaders at national, state, regional and local levels would all do well to carefully examine its findings and make use of its recommendations.'

Eddie Gibbs
Assistant Professor of Church Growth
School of World Mission
Fuller Theological Seminary

'As Christianity in Australia slips into its own Bicentennial, it is urgent that we pause and reflect, not only on where we have come from, but also where we are going. That is why Peter Kaldor's data and his careful analysis are such a timely and essential contribution to our thinking.'

John Harris, Director
Zadok Centre, Canberra

'Who Goes Where? . . . Who Doesn't Care? explores in detail the basic facts about religion in Australia as far as is possible through the use of a range of surveys. It is relevant to all religious and other interested groups. I would recommend it highly whether it's used for planning or for understanding religion in Australia.'

Dr John McCallum, Chairperson
National Catholic Research Council

To Joe Ellis
from Lewis Foster

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WHO DOESN'T CARE?

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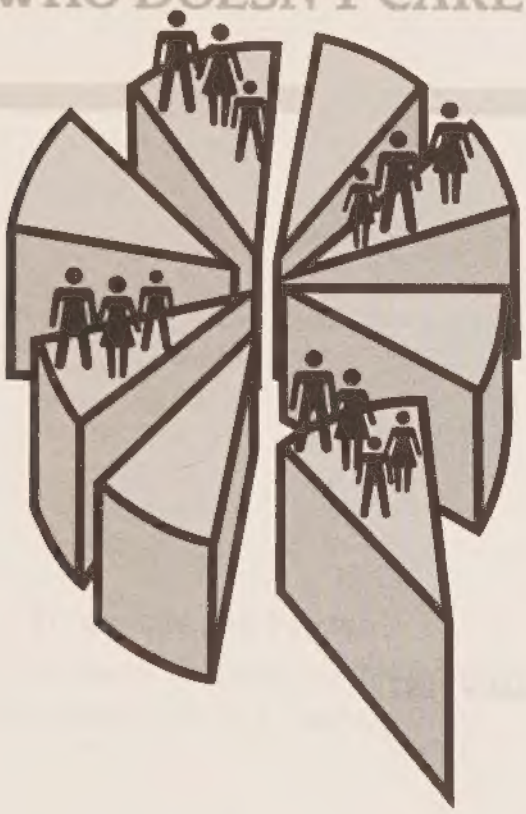

Peter Kaldor

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To the late Jim Punton
who gave so much to those on the frontiers
of ministry in this country

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Foreword

The Christian church is not particularly renowned for its commitment to research to assist it in its missionary task. That may sometimes be the result of a belief that the mission of the church is somehow beyond research. Other times it is the product of an old world mindset that fails to grasp the complexities of modern urban society. Most often it is due to a false economy that sees such research as an expendable budgetary item. There is, however, nothing especially spiritual or expedient about setting out in mission without adequate information about the soil in which seeds are to be sown.

For these reasons this book by Peter Kaldor is like a breath of fresh air. Here are details about church life in Australia that previously could only be guessed at. Peter's findings clearly indicate both the strengths and weaknesses of the churches' penetration of various sections of Australian society during its two hundred years' presence on this continent.

Church leaders at national, state, regional and local levels would all do well to carefully examine his findings and make use of his recommendations for his study raises many questions about church life. As I read this book I found myself asking a number of questions. Are local church structures too parochial to relate to the highly mobile in our societies? How should we develop styles of church life that are accessible to the many groups of people who are uncomfortable with traditional church practices? How can we more adequately train our church leaders for ministry in highly diverse urban communities? How can we mobilise Christians for church-planting?

And perhaps most importantly, what about the cross-cultural demands of ministry within our own societies? Does the training traditionally offered to the overseas missionary in the areas of anthropology, sociology, an understanding of other religions and communication theory now need to be made available as an essential part of basic training for all ministry?

The Board of Mission of the Uniting Church in NSW is to be commended for its foresight in providing the resources to enable this research to be carried out. Peter Kaldor is to be highly commended for his professionalism as a researcher. His insights as a Christian sociologist committed to encouraging the mission of the church are evident throughout this book.

Church reports tend to be of two kinds: those which gather dust and those which *light fires*. This work deserves to be in the latter category. The study provides resource material that marketing companies would pay tens of thousands of dollars to obtain to guide their strategies.

The challenge to the Australian churches is to take the results of this study and the implications set out here and to translate them into mission strategies appropriate to the social contexts in which they find themselves. It is only in this way that we might be able to see the gospel touch not merely the sunburnt skin but also the parched soul of Australian society.

Eddie Gibbs
Assistant Professor of Church Growth
School of World Mission
Fuller Theological Seminary

Summary

This study examines the churches as organisations in Australian society and, in particular, patterns of church attendance amongst different groups within that society. It is a long time since Hans Mol conducted his 'Religion in Australia' study in the mid 1960s and it is evident that much has changed in the intervening years. Attendance levels amongst mainline denominations have dropped to a lower level, the base of nominal adherents of each denomination has shifted, there has been a growth amongst some of the smaller Christian groups, particularly the Pentecostal churches and some ethnic churches. The result has been significant changes in the face of regular church attenders in this country.

Most studies of religion have made use of sample survey data. This study has augmented such surveys with an analysis of church-based estimates of attendance. These suggest that sample surveys may overestimate levels of attendance and, at the same time, show significant regional variations in attendance rates. In the diversity that is modern Australian society there are many different social contexts for ministry. Church penetration of the local community varies quite considerably between different types of areas. The patterns for the major denominations in this country are examined. For the churches these results underline the importance of clearly understanding the nature of the community in which they are a part and of developing models of ministry appropriate to that context.

The study examines a range of factors that influence church attendance — age, gender, marital status, family type, stage in life, residential mobility, socio economic status and ethnic origin. In each case patterns of attendance are compared with those for other aspects of religious orientation, including orthodoxy of religious beliefs, experiences of the supernatural and the relevance of Christian ethics. Where appropriate, patterns of church attendance are compared with patterns of involvement with other local organisations. A range of important insights into the religious orientation of different groups in the Australian community can be gained from this analysis. For some groups, differences in levels of church attendance are also reflected in differences in overall religious orientation. In others it would appear to reflect differences in attitudes to participation in formal organisations. Such results have important implications for the churches, their priorities and the shape of their ministries.

The last few years have seen a range of 'grand theories' regarding church attendance in Australia. We have been asked to ponder our sunburnt souls and to consider whether God can survive in Australia. Whilst these grand theories

have much to teach us, this study suggests that an understanding of church life is best started at the local level, considering the interaction of the local church with its surrounding community. For churches to grow they must be *connected* to the local community and the various cultural groups represented in it. This will depend both on the *receptivity* of the community and the *openness* of the churches. Factors both external and internal to church life will work together to create each of these.

The results of this study suggest that church attendance levels are much higher amongst some cultural groups and sections of the Australian society than amongst others. Often these patterns have become deeply entrenched. That does not mean, however, that they are inevitable or unalterable. Understanding how such patterns have developed can be a starting point for the churches as they seek to respond to the realities of modern life.

Preface

I was brought up as part of a local church in a stable dormitory suburb. The church brought me religious and social education. It provided me with a social life and contacts and ultimately a wife. It provided for many of us a centre around which to organise our lives in a similar way perhaps to a village church in previous ages. It sought to teach us to be good citizens, to be conscious of broader social issues and to work for personal development. A range of clubs and guilds catered for the needs of different groups in the church. The church provided a range of values, beliefs and a concept of faith in God.

If we are to believe the opinion polls over 80 per cent of Australians are not in church on a Sunday. What was for me an accepted social norm is considered by many (most?) Australians as strange behaviour.

Around ten years ago I came to be involved in a community centre in a very different type of area. This was a very diverse community: low income housing mixed with housing for the very well off. High population turnover characterised some in the area: the families of others had lived in their street for three generations. Issues of housing shortages, cultural tensions, freeway construction, drug abuse and unemployment stood in contrast to a tremendous spirit of neighbourliness, straightforward relationships and caring, at least amongst those with whom I was privileged to be involved.

In the midst of this diversity I came to discover that all the churches in the area were struggling to maintain themselves. The area was littered with closed churches, some turned into factories, others into restaurants, others simply closed. Survival was a keyword for those in the churches, although small groups from different backgrounds were very active in seeking to remedy the situation.

For most of those with whom I came in contact, the churches were irrelevant or only to be attended by very different kinds of people. Far from being at the centre of community life, the churches had been left at the periphery.

How different is the place of the churches in these two communities, just ten or so kilometres apart in the urban web that we call Sydney.

These experiences have focussed for me a range of issues that I believe are central to an understanding of the interaction between church and society in our nation.

In 1983 the Board of Mission of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church undertook a commitment to carry out research into the place of religion in Australian society and into patterns of church attendance in different types of communities. At the time of my appointment I had been involved in post graduate research into such questions within the Centre for Environmental

and Urban Studies at Macquarie University. The ongoing connection between church and university has proved valuable to the development of this project.

What follows in this book is a summary of some aspects of that research. The 'Who Goes Where?' study provides detail of who attends church, what types of communities are more likely to produce high rates of church attendance and how these patterns vary between denominations. The study is equally about those who tend not to go to church, or communities in which traditional models of ministry and church prove difficult to sustain or are inappropriate.

Church attendance is but one aspect of the religious experience of Australians. There are, for instance, many in our society who accept orthodox Christian beliefs but who do not translate these beliefs into church attendance. The 'Who Goes Where?' study uses data from the Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS) to compare patterns of church attendance with the patterns for other dimensions of religious life and orientation.

The subject of religion in Australia has started to attract increasing attention from social researchers. There was a long period after Hans Mol's 'Religion in Australia' survey was carried out in the 1960s when little was written. In recent years we have seen an increasing interest in the subject, although sometimes based on little in the way of data. That should not be seen as a criticism of these writers as most available data have been very general. Further, we do need the 'grand theories' as benchmarks to which we can compare our own experiences.

This study seeks to provide some more detailed information in which to earth our understanding of the church in Australia. It will be of interest to social scientists, sociologists of religion and those concerned about participation in local organisations. Above all, it will be of value to church people, clergy and laity, who seek to better understand how the nature of the local community affect church life, ministry and mission priorities.

This study will be at times uncomfortable for the churches in the challenges that it lays before them but, at others, it may offer hope. Many of the patterns of church attendance are deep and entrenched. None, however, is absolute or unchangeable. Any social organisation, if it is to expand, must be open to different types of people from different backgrounds, open to share with them and to be changed in the process. I work within the life of the churches and see many groups from different denominations seeking to bridge the cultural barriers around them. With new vision and a willingness to evolve more appropriate models of ministry these groups have become involved with people normally well outside church life. The agenda which this study places before the churches is a healthy and life-giving one.

The research that has been undertaken for this study has been done under joint church and university auspices. It has been important to maintain both academic rigour and practical applicability. This report walks the same tightrope. On the one hand it seeks to satisfy the serious academic who will wish to understand clearly the methodology and statistical procedures that are behind the results quoted here. On the other hand it is written to be easily read-

able by interested church people for whom the results and its implications are of most importance.

Maintaining this balance is a difficult but important task. Too much reflective writing from church observers has been almost without solid facts to serve as a foundation for their generalisations. On the other hand some academic writing has been carried out from so high in an ivory tower that it has lacked the earthing in the real world that would make it helpful in church life.

One further preliminary comment should be made here. This study has been an exercise in mapping, exploring the general patterns of church attendance in Australia. It is not an explicitly theological statement. Nor does it seek to make a judgment on the spiritual 'tone' of church life. Those within the churches may well suggest that reaching out beyond the cultural barriers presented in this study will require more faith in God, the Holy Spirit or a renewal in the life of the churches. Such issues, whilst important, lie outside the scope of this report. It may, however, provoke reflections on such issues that may be better informed because of the material collected here.

Thank You

This research could not have progressed beyond first base had it not been for the support, assistance and commitment of many, many people — far too many to list here. Some people and groups have been mentioned in the acknowledgments.

The support of a range of staff at Macquarie University has been invaluable. Richard Cardew and Ross Homel have, over several years, helped shape and refine this piece of work. In addition Ross has provided almost limitless help with statistical procedures and analysis. The work of two research assistants, Greg Robertson and Andrew Moffatt, is also gratefully acknowledged.

Without the assistance of the Board of Mission of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church, this task could not have proceeded as it has. Many people have shared ideas and hunches. I want to thank Dean Drayton, the General Secretary of the Board, for his support, encouragement and championing of the need for the churches to look seriously at this kind of research. But more than that, he must be thanked for his ideas. He has helped shape this work in a very significant way.

Many others gave of themselves to ensure the project could be completed. Gary Ashton-Jones spent long hours solving the problems associated with handling and analysing small area census data. Two workers with the Board of Mission — Len Willey and Tony Bancroft — likewise gave large portions of their time to data analysis and presentation.

One of the most exciting aspects of this study for me has been the spirit of co-operation and trust between people from different denominations that has emerged during the project. I want to thank those whose names appear in the acknowledgments and many others for their openness and assistance.

Others have provided ideas and inspiration in the carrying out of this work. The list could be endless but I must thank Susan and Florence Kaldor, Bruce Dutton, Les Vitnell and a range of people in the area in which I live and connected to Scaffolding for their support and ideas.

To all these people, many thanks. They are not responsible for what this study has become, but it is far the better for their contributions.

Peter Kaldor, 1987

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FRAMING THE STUDY

This chapter presents the basic framework of the 'Who Goes Where?' study. The background and rationale for the study are given; previous research and its limitations are outlined. Finally the data sources and analysis procedures are briefly described.

The churches are major social institutions within Australian society. In many different ways they seek to give expression to the religious experience of the population and, in turn, to encourage, shape and renew that religious life.

There would be very few types of voluntary organisations which could claim the size of membership or the number of attenders that the churches each Sunday welcome through their doors. A sizeable minority of the Australian population are regular attenders, the majority of Australians tend to accept some basic beliefs about God and ask the churches to officiate at rites of passage such as funerals. Churches are often an important component of the skyline of towns and cities and have had a significant influence on the shaping of the values and traditions of our society.

Church life in Australia varies greatly in popularity and style in different social circumstances. It may take the form of a local suburban church, a regional or city church, a home fellowship, an ethnic congregation, a religious order or a rural 'union' church. In addition, different denominations have different priorities and emphases, even within denominations diverse theological traditions can result in different types of congregations.

Whatever the divine nature of the inspiration for them, the churches are social structures which, in pursuit of their goals, operate as social entities. All

churches are subject to the range of social forces and processes that affect any social organisation or voluntary association They develop values, a structure, forms of decision making and leadership, a set of beliefs and values that determine actions and priorities They face and respond to issues raised by the social context in which they find themselves.

And that social context is a rapidly changing one. Technological and industrial change, varying economic conditions, global communications, increasing mobility, changing family structures, workforce participation rates and patterns of immigration are but some of the changes taking place in Australian society.

UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERNS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN AUSTRALIA

If we are to understand an institution in relation to the wider society in which it finds itself it is important to have information on the size, character and distribution of its membership and supporters Such information assists in assessing its strength, the kinds of people it serves, the kinds of social contexts in which it operates successfully and those in which it does not, its position within the larger society and the problems of organisation and operation which confront it (Moberg 1962).

This study seeks to provide a profile of church attendance in Australia in the 1980s and to determine the underlying factors that work to create the patterns of church life.

There are many factors at work that combine to affect church attendance in any particular context Literature on church growth and decline, primarily from the USA, draws a distinction between *internal* and *external* factors In their major work on the Protestant churches as social institutions, Douglass and Brunner (1935) presented a range of factors influencing church growth and decline. These factors had to do with both church life and with the environment in which the church is placed More recently the distinction has been developed by Dean Hoge and David Roozen (1979) and used in debate about church growth and decline Denominational traditions are examples of factors *internal* to the life of the churches. There can be many examples of local *internal* factors, such as the quality of preaching, commonality of direction of the group, orientation to worship, past history and the nature of group life All these can and do have a marked impact on church-going They are not however the focus of this study.

Here we seek to look for *external* factors influencing church going Are certain types of people or groups in the community more likely to attend church than others? Is church going more a natural part of community life in some types of areas than in others?

As will be elaborated in later chapters, there has been considerable debate in the American context about the relative importance of *internal* and *external* factors in the growth or decline of churches The 'Who Goes Where?' study is *not* an attempt to buy into such a debate Fundamentally this is because the de-

bate appears to be based on a rather simplistic model of the relationship be tween a major institution and the wider society in which it is placed.

'RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA': A LANDMARK STUDY

In 1971 a book was published carrying the title *Religion in Australia A Sociological Investigation* It represented the results of research carried out in the late 1960s into religion in Australian society by Hans Mol It was, and perhaps still is, the landmark study into this aspect of Australian life Mol described it as an 'exploratory study' (Mol 1971, x) This was to be a general mapping expedition rather than a specific exploration in depth Mol com ments that the degree of validity of the many generalisations in the book would only be known after much further research had been carried out. 'The author is confident that the major research conclusions will stand up to the test of future studies He is also sure that all these findings are in need of further refinement' (p xii) He further suggests that it will provide plenty of ammunition for sharpening the wits of future thesis writers (p. xiii).

Research in the fifteen years since *Religion in Australia* was first published have been, in the main, about specific issues or groups. Thus Mol's survey and his interpretations of it have continued to provide a base line for much thinking and for many of the basic assumptions in the field In 1985 Mol produced a new book entitled *The Faith of Australians* which re-presented much of the same material with a new face.

In general the book and its author have done much to make clear the re ligious picture in Australia Hans Mol has had a pioneering role in research into religion in Australia, though there are some limitations that need to be understood

TAKING ANOTHER LOOK

The picture of the religious orientation of Australians and of church going that emerges from Mol's work is essentially a static one, it is a picture of a phenomenon that is changing only gradually, if at all. Perhaps its timing was unfortunate, taking place immediately prior to a period of rapid social change. The Vietnam war is now a memory, its impact on the attitudes and values of the emerging youth culture has significantly affected our society. The post Second World War economic boom — possibly the longest in Australia's history — has been replaced by far more uncertain times. Immigration has continued to change the cultural make-up of Australia We have also seen distinct changes in family structures and the role of women in society

On the religious front there have also been many changes Christian schools have grown up around the country, the charismatic movement has exerted a major impact signalling the emergence of a new force in Australian church life and a new conservatism has developed Mega churches have grown in most Australian cities and there is increasing use of popular music and the arts in church life Sunday schools appear to be waning, Vatican II has

affected Catholicism in a great many ways, the Uniting Church has come into being and migration has altered the denominational balances in this country Growth in the Pentecostal and smaller sect type churches has further shifted the focus of church life In a new housing estate on the outskirts of Adelaide, I noticed recently three new church buildings standing side by side So wasteful for the different denominations to build their own buildings, I thought. Then I realized that these three buildings belonged to the Assemblies of God, Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists How times have changed!

Within mainline church life these changes have been accompanied by quite different relationships between the different denominational groups In describing his school days in the 1950s Bruce Wilson highlights Catholic/Protestant rivalry. 'Two buses took kids from my area to the local schools — one for the Catholics and one for the "Publics". If our bus came first we'd rush inside to our seats, open the windows and yell "Tyke B s" while we tried to spit on the Catholics still waiting at the stop. If the bus came first the situation was reversed' (1978, 6) Such hostility represented old establishment divisions relating to Irish and English social differences.

Twenty to thirty years later such hostility has virtually disappeared Denominational loyalty has lost this social significance With the exception of some of the more strident and conservative churches, there has emerged a new spirit of tolerance and sometimes co operation. Recently a weekend newspaper described how a Catholic library assistant spent her Sunday (Good Weekend, 9/5/86, 62) It described a busy Sunday shift at the library No day of rest or Sunday baked dinner After work she makes a trip down to St Kevin's for mass and youth group fellowship. Whilst she unwinds, her husband is carrying out his duties as an officer in the Salvation Army They have some interesting theological discussions she notes but, as Father Dino, her priest, says: 'Hey, no worries — we're all one in Christ — O.K.' How times have changed!

It is high time that further detailed studies of religion in Australia were carried out.

The Uniformity of Church Life?

There are other reasons too for suggesting the need for a closer look at church attendance patterns *Religion in Australia* emphasised the uniformity of Australian religious practice and played down the impact of factors such as age, occupation, location of residence, education and mobility on either church-going or other aspects of religious orientation.

Other sources, however, suggest that attendance varies substantially within the Australian community.

First, within most of the planning bodies of the major denominations in Australia there is a belief that their churches in some areas are growing, whilst in others they are declining The colloquial term 'Bible belt' is in common usage by planners, many clergy and commentators to describe areas where church attendance is at its highest in our larger cities.

Secondly, there is a range of studies of church attendance overseas that suggest significant variations in church attendance amongst different age groups, in different regions and amongst different kinds of communities.

Furthermore, research into the nature of participation in formal social institutions suggests that certain groups are more likely to participate than others (e.g. Janowitz and Kasarda 1974).

There are also historical studies of church attendance in this country which suggest that in the past, church-going has been far from uniform amongst different sections of the Australian population. Mol himself cites some historical evidence on age and socio economic variations (Mol 1971, 33 and 87). Others have commented on the differences in church attendance amongst different socio economic groupings (e g. Kaldor, 1984).

Finally, given the increasing cultural diversity of Australian society that has come with increasing urbanisation and immigration, one would expect that church attendance patterns would vary considerably between different groups.

For these reasons it is important to look more closely at patterns of church attendance in Australia. Indeed, when one examines more closely the *Religion in Australia* data, it becomes apparent that, whilst in some cases his conclusions have emanated from survey results, in others they have hinged on his interpretation of results and on what he considers as important trends. Mol's benchmark was the large differences in church attendance rates of people from various denominational groups, he saw less importance in age and occupational differences, for example, because they were smaller than the denominational variations.

There is no doubt from his studies or from subsequent work that denominational variations in attendance are very large. That does not mean, however, that we should neglect the effects of other factors which are also of importance. Attendance at church can mean different things for different denominations.

Mol himself comes to this conclusion:

> The important point emerging from this data is that . . . (overall) attendance figures are of only relative importance. The variation between the denominations is too great to tie such divergent figures together in one meaningful percentage figure (Mol 1971,14).

Yet this is exactly what Mol does in his own analysis of variations in attendance rates related to various socio-demographic variables. Where the important question should be 'What effect do the various factors have on attendance rates for each religious tradition?' the issue being tested is often reduced to 'How do overall attendance variations due to a factor compare with variations in attendance between denominations?'

In Mol's study, the attendance at church of Catholics was more than twice that of the other major non Catholic groups. Within the non Catholic sample, the variation in attendance due to factors such as occupation or age was of the

same order or greater than the differences in attendance between denominational groups (details of this are given in appendix 4) Using denominational differences as the benchmark therefore risks the submerging of important variations in church attendance patterns within each denomination.

To sum up, *Religion in Australia* presents a valuable picture and has much to offer However there are some limitations, religious life in Australia would seem to contain more variety and colour today than it might lead us to believe

THE 'WHO GOES WHERE?' STUDY

This study has been designed to explore patterns of church attendance within Australian society and to ascertain the impact of factors such as age, socio-economic status, mobility, ethnicity, family structure and gender on church attendance. In framing such a study, five central requirements stand out. We shall explore each in turn.

Where possible the study should:

- ☐ look at patterns on a denomination by denomination basis, examining both similarities and differences.
- ☐ attempt to give a picture of the relationship between church going and other aspects of religious orientation.
- ☐ recognise some of the limits of sample survey data and compare survey results with other types of data.
- ☐ take the nature of the community seriously and compare attendance rates in different types of communities.
- ☐ go beyond the kind of 'grand theorising' that has typified discussion on the church in Australia and provide a picture of the factors affecting church life at the local level.

Exploring Denominational Differences

The religious denomination with which one identifies provides a context and tradition for the expression of one's religious experiences As people such as Gerhard Lenski (1961) have underlined, denominational affiliation provides associational and cultural ties, it links people together with a common cultural heritage.

Different denominations stress different things in different ways This has been a central finding in Gary Bouma and Beverley Dixon's recently published analysis of the Australian Values Study Survey They suggest (1986, 168) that denominational differences affect people's attitudes to politics, the family, other social groups and moral attitudes, as well as the ways in which they are religious (p. 16).

Even within denominations there may be important variations between subgroups Speaking of Catholics, Cyril Hally suggests that attendance at mass forms a more central role in the religious life of some ethnic groups than others (1982, 86).

Attempts have been made in this study to compare patterns for the different denominations. Both similarities and differences can reveal much about religious life.

Church Attendance and Other Dimensions of Religious Orientation

Church attendance is but one measure of religious orientation. It measures a behavioural dimension but gives no indication of, for instance, a person's beliefs or the consequence of those beliefs. It is not a measure of their knowledge of doctrine or of their experience of supernatural forces in their lives.

Sociologists have often described religion as a multi-faceted concept and there have been various attempts to define the different dimensions of religious orientation. Perhaps the most well known and most discussed model has been that developed by Charles Glock and Rodney Stark (1965). It includes an 'ideological' dimension (religious beliefs), a 'ritualistic' dimension (active involvement in religious worship and other practices), an 'experiential' aspect (experiences of the supernatural in one's life) and a 'consequential' dimension (the impact of religious orientation on the rest of peoples' lives).

Whilst much of this study is focused on church attendance, it is essential to earth that work within a wider understanding of religious orientation. Are there, for instance, groups in the community who accept traditional Christian beliefs or claim experiences of the supernatural but who do not translate this into active church involvement?

Beyond Sample Survey Data

Whilst a sample survey clearly offers many possibilities with regard to religious research, it has many inherent difficulties. In answering the questions asked in a survey, people are responding to their understanding of the question which may or may not be the question as the researcher intended it. Or respondents may answer as they feel they *ought* to answer. It is quite likely that surveys may overestimate church attendance because respondents feel they ought to have attended church whether or not their actions correspond to their ideals. Furthermore, the social desirability of church-going may vary considerably between different groups within the community.

Such discrepancies can only be tested by using actual church attendance data and or surveys carried out in the pews. This study makes use of both

Taking Seriously the Nature of the Community

Church attendance is a group activity, religious practices and beliefs are part of a cultural inheritance. Our interpretation of life experiences is conditioned by our environment, background and peers. In searching for patterns in

church attendance or religious experience it is important to examine not just individual characteristics but also area effects. The same person, for instance, may be more likely to attend church in an area where church attendance is a community norm than if living in an area where, to the dominant cultures, church-going is quite alien.

Such findings have been made in a range of studies Studying the British context, sociologist Peter Wilmott found that working class people were more likely to attend church if they lived in a middle class community than if they lived in one which was predominantly working class (Wilmott 1963, 86). Similar findings came from a small sample in the Sydney Family Study (Homel, Personal Communications, May 1984).

In his analysis of factors influencing religious commitment, Kevin Welch underlines the importance of going beyond individual level explanations He feels that little systematic attention has been given to the role of the community in shaping religious belief and behaviour (1981, 91)

This point is well made in some of the work of Rodney Stark (1983). He reports studies of various possible consequences of religious commitment in the United States In each he suggests that as long as religion is conceived as an individual trait, a set of personal beliefs and practices, we will be limited in our understanding of its impact on other aspects of our behaviour. He suggests that religion gains its power to shape the individual as an aspect of the group life In communities that are not religious, religious issues will rarely surface in the process by which values and norms are created Any individual commitment will tend to be kept out of group values formation since it will not strike a responsive chord with others By contrast, in communities where many people are religious, such concerns can be shared and religious dimensions amplified and made part of everyday interaction.

The *Religion in Australia* study was clearly sociological in intent. It was concerned with the religious patterns of a particular society rather than the universal characteristics of the religious personality (1971, xiv). Yet apart from a couple of instances all data are personal data They are data about the *individual's* age, education or occupation They are not about the make up of the community in which a person resides, interacts or forms values It is a limited basis for considering the effect of community and environment on patterns of religious adherence.

In this study, use will be made of attendance figures and census data to look at church attendance rates in different types of areas In this way we are making an initial incursion into the whole arena of the relationship between the church and local cultures.

Beyond 'Grand Theorising'

The last decade has seen the presentation of some grand theories regarding church life David Millikan, in *The Sunburnt Soul*, has mourned the lack of a truly Australian expression of Christian faith, Bruce Wilson has looked at the processes of secularization as he pondered the question of whether God can

survive in Australia. The Church Growth Movement has become a powerful force within many sectors of the churches and at the same time has also developed many enemies.

The grand theories have not tended to be accompanied by much in the way of solid evidence from the Australian context. Church growth analysis has come from data collected in other countries and usually interpreted through American eyes — where religion has quite a different place in the wider society. The work of Wilson and Millikan has been rather impressionistic.

This study seeks to provide some more detailed data in which to earth our understanding of the church in Australia. By way of illustration, David Millikan argues that we must embed church life and expression more into Australian culture. By illustrating the breadth of cultural groups that make up our multicultural society and by highlighting the different patterns of church involvement amongst these groups, this study seeks to provide a detailed and helpful framework to understand how to make use of Millikan's very general ideas.

Thus, in this study, we are starting at the other end. By observing patterns of church going and its place in the overall social and religious scene we can start to understand how these patterns have come about and a model can be developed of the issues and possibilities facing the local church.

DATA AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

This study has largely utilised existing data sources that can yield insights into attendance patterns.

There are two distinct aspects to the project that need to be outlined separately. The first is an analysis of various aspects of religious beliefs, practices and experiences based on social surveys carried out on samples of the Australian population. The second is an analysis of church attendance patterns using data obtained from the various churches and demographic data from the 1981 census.

Survey Data

A range of surveys are being used in this study. They are described below:

(1) *The Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS)* is part of an international survey programme undertaken to compare fundamental values in different countries. In Australia it was carried out by the Roy Morgan Research Centre using a one hour face to face interview with a final sample of 1228 Australians aged fourteen years or over. It was carried out between August and October 1983.

The AVSS contained over twenty questions canvassing various aspects of religious orientation. They probed behavioural aspects such as attendance at church, membership of a church or voluntary work carried out for the church, there were questions about specific beliefs and the relevance of the Ten Commandments, about people's experience of the supernatural and their

prayer life Some questions about general religious orientation were also included. They are listed in full in appendix 2.

(ii) *The McNair-Anderson Surveys* The McNair-Anderson organisation provided data from two surveys, one of 2,000 responses and the other of 3,600 responses, carried out in 1983–84 Each was a survey conducted by interview on an Australia-wide sample. Apart from a range of demographic data, the surveys contain information on church attendance and denomination. The larger sample size enables more detailed analysis of denominational differences in patterns of attendance than is possible with the AVSS data Details are in appendix 3.

(iii) *Older Survey Data* A range of older social surveys have been collected to examine how patterns of church attendance have changed over the last thirty years. These surveys are detailed in appendix 4.

Church and Census Data

Using church and census data, analysis is possible of the types of communities in which rates of church going are high or low.

(i) *Church Data.* Information was collected on a range of denominations and church organizations. In some cases this has been from published data In most cases it has involved negotiation with those churches or organisations The denominations and groups include Uniting Church, Baptist, Presbyterian and Churches of Christ (NSW and ACT), Anglican Church (Sydney and Wollongong), Catholic Church (Sydney and Central Coast), Salvation Army, Scripture Union, Vision Ministries (Sydney) and the Christian Life Centre (a large church of the Assemblies of God in Sydney).

Data have been collected on attendance or membership in each church or parish within the given region. In the cases of the Christian Life Centre, Vision Ministries and Scripture Union the number of supporters in each postcode area has been collected. Further details can be found in appendix 1

(ii) *Census Data* For the major denominations census data have been obtained on the area covered by each parish. From what is a huge mass of census data on each parish area, about forty key variables have been selected to function as 'social indicators' A series of social indicators is not intended to provide a complete picture of an area but rather to act as a monitoring device (Department of Social Security 1976), in our case to distinguish clearly and simply between different types of communities The data selected from the census to form the basis of the *social profile* of each parish area are given in appendix 1.

This aspect of the study is limited to attendance patterns in NSW, but we do have the national survey data with which to compare these results, to see whether they are broadly indicative of trends on a wider basis.

* * *

This study brings together results from these different sources to provide a picture of church attendance in Australian communities Whilst of necessity

many figures and tables are presented here, they have been kept to a minimum and presented in as simple a way as possible Where possible a standard format has been used, all the results presented are statistically significant at a 5 per cent level In fact the majority are significant at much lower probability levels Where complex mathematical and statistical procedures have been used, the results are tabulated in the appendices and only the implications presented in the text.

The rest of this study is divided into four parts The first part concentrates on overall patterns of church attendance, comparing attendance rates from both the survey and church data Changes in church attendance over the last thirty years are examined as well as some of the 'grand theories' that have been put forward to explain them A model is presented of the factors affecting a local church in its life and ministry.

The second part focuses in the main on church and census data as it presents results from an analysis of regional fluctuations in attendance rates. In what types of communities do the churches tend to be strong or weak? How do the patterns compare between denominations?

In the third part, both survey and church data are used to provide a profile of the Australian church goer. What types of people are more likely to attend church? In dealing with the results we seek to explore why these patterns have come about and what they say about the relationship between the churches and the wider society In each chapter there is also an exploration of the implications of these results for the churches.

The final part presents some general observations and conclusions from the study.

PART 1

The Overall Picture

God is like an ice chest in a world that has invented the refrigerator.

— Bruce Wilson (1983, 33)

While the imminent collapse of religion and the church and the withering away of the need for God has been proclaimed repeatedly . . . during the last two centuries, some churches in fact continue to grow.

— Gary Bouma (1982, 34)

The next three chapters look broadly at church attendance and religious orientation in Australia. In chapter 2 we examine overall patterns of attendance, pointing up denominational differences and changes over time It is extremely important to place patterns of attendance within the broader picture of religious life in Australia and so, in chapter 3, attention is given to other aspects of religious orientation. There exists a considerable proportion of Australians who are religious in various ways but who do not translate that into church attendance.

In chapter 4 is presented is a range of theories and models seeking to explain the changes that have taken place in church attendance over the last thirty years. They raise a range of issues important to the churches as they seek to respond to Australia in the 1980s. At the end of the chapter is provided a framework for looking at church life in Australia

2

CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN AUSTRALIA — OVERALL PATTERNS

Based on sample surveys around a quarter of the Australian population claim to have attended church in the last month. At the same time around 50 per cent have not attended for over twelve months. An examination of clergy estimates of attendance suggests that sample survey results may be over optimistic.

Surveys carried out over the last thirty years paint a picture of declining levels of church attendance during the late 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s this decline appears to have levelled off. The profile of nominal religious affiliation has altered somewhat over the same period. For the churches this has been a period of changing fortunes.

In February 1788 the first service of Christian worship was held on the continent at Port Jackson. It was the last great inhabited land mass to hear the gospel.

It was not an auspicious start and, for the first thirty years or so, religion had only a token presence in the colony. Governor Phillip saw the first chaplain's role as a kind of 'moral policeman', as an instrument of government

control and authority. Historian David Bollen graphically describes the different place of religion in the founding of colonies in Australia and in North America:

> Britain introduced herself to the east coast of Australia in the person not of a Christian missionary but of a naval governor. Australia began not as a mission but as a gaol. The contrast with the great 17th-century British colonising enterprise in North America could not be greater: pilgrims in the one case, criminals in the other; searchers after the heavenly city as against off scourings of the earthly (1973, 4).

The Rev. Richard Johnson came to Australia to lay the foundations for a Christian Australia. But, as a recent paper from Fusion Australia puts it, he had his work cut out for him:

> Transplant 700 convicts to an alien country, add 400 military men out for a quick quid, then add the problems of starvation and despair. Spice the mixture with the arrival of 225 disorientated female convicts and a lack of any other entertaining diversion.
> Pour in one exhausted and unsupported clergyman.
> Shake for six years and you get a bewildered clergyman on the edge of physical and nervous collapse, and a little colony that's looking more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah every day, and a baby boom (1986, 1).

AND WHAT OF TODAY?

Nearly two hundred years later as we celebrate the bicentennial of white settlement in Australia, it is appropriate to stop and examine the progress of the churches in this country.

The survey data in this study suggest that currently around one fifth of Australians are in a church on a typical Sunday and that about a quarter attend a church at least monthly. At the same time they reveal that around 50 per cent of Australians have not attended a regular church service for over a year. These figures are presented in figure 2.1.

There is good agreement between the results from the McNair Anderson sample and the Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS), apart from the 'Other Christian' category. It must be noted, however, that the two surveys asked slightly different questions. In the McNair-Anderson sample respondents were asked when they last attended church other than for weddings, funerals and special occasions. The AVSS asked how often respondents usually attended church.

The pattern revealed in figure 2.1 provides both hope and challenge to those in the churches. *On the one hand, church attendance is an activity of a sizable proportion of the Australian population. On the other hand, the churches have no contact with at least half the population and thus no direct*

Figure 2.1 Attendance at Church in the 1980s

Source McNair-Anderson 1983, 84

Breakdown for Each Denominational Grouping

Denomination	*Attend Weekly*	*Attend Monthly*		*Attend Yearly or Less*	
	AVSS	*McNair-Anderson*	*AVSS*	*McNair-Anderson*	*AVSS*
Anglican	9%	14%	16%	62%	62%
Catholic	39%	44%	46%	30%	35%
Uniting/Methodist	19%	26%	27%	46%	52%
Presbyterian	9%	15%	17%	63%	64%
(Uniting/Methodist/ Presbyterian)	(15%)	(22%)	(23%)	(53%)	(57%)
Baptist		5.1%		25%	–
Other Christian	44%	40%	52%	37%	29%
Total Population (Adjusted estimates — see note)	21%	25% (24%)	27% (26%)	52%	55%

Note Using the denominational attendance rates, overall estimates were calculated on the basis of the percentage of each religious grouping at the 1981 Census (see appendix 4 for details)

Sources McNair-Anderson
Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS)

role in the formation of their religious values and ideas. Church attendance is a minority pursuit in this country. This conclusion is underlined by the analysis of clergy estimates of attendance later in the chapter.

Denominational Differences

We see in figure 2 1 wide differences in the attendance rates of members of the various denominational groupings Attendance is highest amongst Baptists, followed by Catholics, Uniting/Methodist/Presbyterians and then Anglicans.

Large percentages of all the denominational groups have not attended church for over twelve months Over half the mainline Protestant groups fit into this category.

Within each denominational tradition, participation in formal worship services has a particular place Many Protestant traditions, for instance, emphasize the importance of Christian fellowship. Church attendance is a central moment for fellowship along with a desire to worship. In such traditions attenders usually return to the same gathered community each week Attendance at church carries with it a range of pressures and obligations related to a commitment to a particular group of people.

Catholic tradition tends to emphasise more the importance of the act of worship itself. It therefore does not carry, to the same degree, the emphasis on fellowship Catholics are thus more likely to attend the most convenient mass centre than to feel the need to meet in church with the same people each week From his analysis of a census of mass attenders in Western Sydney in 1981, John Doran suggests that the the Catholic measure of commitment to the church most comparable to Protestant attendance rates is a measure of participation in other groups in the life of the church (personal communications).

The Catholic church, however, places a far higher emphasis on the importance of attending mass Church attendance tends to be learned behaviour transmitted through teachings, kinship and shared group values (Yinger 1970, 130) In this context Catholic schooling has an important role Some research has suggested that church participation is less a 'voluntary' activity and more a requirement for Catholics than for Protestants (e g O'Hara 1980).

Writing on Australia, historian Ken Inglis makes some suggestions about why Catholics are such active worshippers 'An answer occurs readily to the anti Catholic, that the priests, who dominate their flock, make the sheep go to mass It is indeed true that presence at mass is spiritually necessary to Catholics in a sense more precise than is attendance at a religious service for Protestants' (1965, 44) In noting that Catholic attendance is much higher in Australia than in some European countries, he suggests that the reason lies in Australian Catholicism's Irish ancestory.

The period leading up to the settlement of Australia was marked by antagonism between the English and Irish. For centuries the Irish had resisted British rule and various uprisings were suppressed To the English, the Irish

appeared as barbarians As historian Patrick O'Farrell comments, the English establishment saw two essential conditions of civilisation· the British political and social institutions and the Protestant religion On both counts the Irish fell far short (1968, 3).

The Catholic church held a central place in the lives of the Irish people In their oppressed condition, Irish peasants often looked to priests to carry their grievances and give leadership Thus religious differences became a central focus in the hostility with the British In eighteenth century Britain there still existed laws seeking to restrict Catholics and their religion Such antagonism was transported to Australia and became a central theme in Australian religious life and in class relations in this country.

In large part Australian church history has been about the need to accommodate several religious traditions, all providing a sense of 'tribal' identity to a group within the community and three of them having a heritage as being the 'officially endorsed' religion back home.

On the high Baptist attendance rates Inglis argues that they tend to be a more exclusive denomination with a stable following 'protected by kinship and other sources of fellowship against the corrosion of secularity' In these comments Inglis was foreshadowing a common line of thought in the last ten years that churches with clear-cut messages and which tend to be exclusive are more likely to achieve high attendance rates than the more tolerant, all inclusive mainline churches Put in simple terms: churches which shield their members from the secular forces of society by offering clear-cut alternatives are more likely to attract members than those urging their supporters to grapple with secular forces and to accommodate them.

Beyond Sample Survey Data

Most research into church attendance patterns has relied exclusively on the results of sample surveys There are many reasons for this, particularly convenience and availability of data However they do have their limitations.

Survey literature is full of examples of just how important precise wording, format and placement of questions really is A central assumption made in drafting questionnaires is that the question means the same to respondents as it means to its author This is often far from the case

There can be many forms of bias in respondents' replies to questions Kalton and Schuman (1982) list several There can be an *acquiescence* bias where respondents tend, regardless of content, to agree rather than disagree In long lists of options, respondents are more likely to choose from higher up the list Of potential importance to our study, there can be a *social desirability* bias where respondents tend to provide the answer that they feel they ought to give or the one that will present them in a more favourable light. Possibly it is still respectable in modern Australia to be seen as a church goer Distortion due to desirability bias need not be the result of a conscious decision but could also be simply a natural tendency or even a result of distortions in the respondents' perception of themselves.

It is important to recognise that such bias need not be uniform across all segments of society. What is socially desirable within one sub-culture, for instance, may not carry the same perception in another subgroup. Such differential bias further complicates survey analysis. Social surveys are valuable, but one must interpret them with caution and care.

One means of testing survey results is to compare them with estimates from elsewhere. In this study we have such a means in the form of data collected on attendance from the churches themselves. Social survey material on church attendance counts *statements* about behaviour, estimates of attendance by clergy count the *results* of such behaviour (Currie, Gilbert and Horsley 1977:15). For each of the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting churches we have clergy estimates of attendance in all parishes in Sydney, as well as on Uniting churches throughout NSW. Estimates of attendance in these regions for these denominations can also be derived from the sample surveys. We know the total population and the number of nominal adherents for all three denominations in these regions from census data. It is therefore possible to compare estimates of weekly church attendance from the Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS) data with those from the churches themselves.

The results of this comparison suggest that the sample survey data appear to arrive at significantly higher attendance estimates than those arrived at from estimation by clergy. One difficulty in such a comparison is that sample surveys only deal with respondents over a certain age (in the case of the AVSS the minimum age was fourteen years) whereas clergy estimates cover all ages. For all three denominations however, the AVSS suggests that there are more people over fourteen years of age in church each week than the total clergy estimates of people of all ages! We have no means in this study of testing the attendance rates of children and there can be reasons for thinking it may be lower or higher than that of adults. If their attendance levels were similar to those of adults then the clergy estimates could be considerably less than 75 per cent of the figures suggested by the sample surveys.

The discrepancy which we have seen here was also evident when several other surveys apart from the AVSS were examined. It is also supported by some unpublished work carried out by Doug Hynd in Queanbeyan. Comparing survey based projections of Anglican attendance he found actual attendance was only 42 per cent of the survey based projections (Hynd 1982).

It is highly likely that there is a social desirability bias in people's responses to religious questions. Such a desirability bias would not be uniform across all sections of Australian society. Unfortunately we have at present no way of testing this.

Given the above difficulties in interpretation of survey results, one must also note some difficulties with the church data, which means we should not rush to claim it as *the* accurate figure. A few ethnic and regional churches have not returned data. It is possible some churches may understate attendance in order to minimise financial contributions to central church agencies! On the other hand, church planners and researchers often speak derisively of the 'clergy fudge factor', by which they are referring to the possibility of clergy

overstating attendance rates (maybe unwittingly) to improve the picture of their congregation! Whether that occurs is at this stage an untested question.

Despite such difficulties, the church data can be taken as a fairly useful estimate of what is a changing and fluctuating phenomenon. Whilst it may give little comfort to those in the churches considered here, it suggests that estimates based on survey data overstate likely attendance rates. Should this be duplicated in other states (which is likely) and within other denominations (which is possible), the general statement that one in five Australians are in church each Sunday could prove to be an optimistic assessment. A census of church attenders carried out in mid 1986 by several denominations in NSW will no doubt provide further information on this question.

For the purposes of the present study, these results reinforce the importance of balancing, where possible, survey results with church data. The discrepancies highlighted should not lead us to discard survey results but rather to proceed with them with care and caution. Our safeguard is the use of more than one survey and the comparison where possible of results from survey and church data.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE — THE LAST THIRTY YEARS

Research into changes in church attendance in the USA suggest that church attendance rates reached a peak there during the 1950s and early 1960s. This was a period of the 'revival of religion'. During the following decade church attendance in the USA declined substantially (Princeton Religious Research Center 1982: 44). This was particularly true for mainline Protestant denominations. There have been some suggestions of upturns in attendance in the USA in the late 1970s and the early years of this decade. This has been particularly true in some theologically conservative denominations, although growth has been claimed in some mainline churches (e.g. Hartman 1976, 1982).

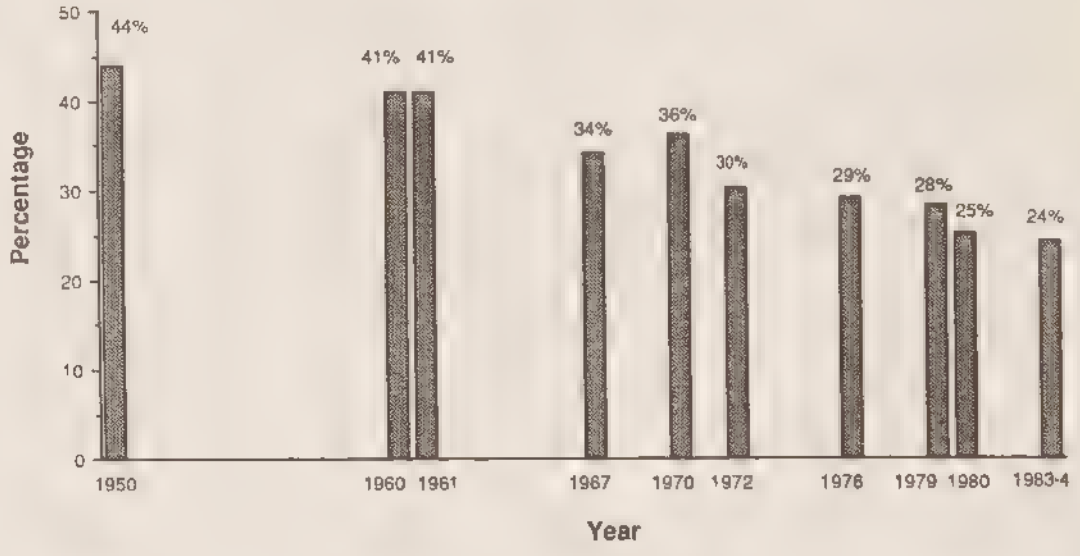
It is important to emphasize the dangers of comparison of church attendance in this country with that in the United States. They provide two different national contexts, the churches' place in Australian society is very different from that in the USA. Nevertheless, in Australia we are subject to many social and cultural influences from across the Pacific that may have a similar impact on church attendance rates.

Survey data on church attendance in Australia have been gathered for many years. Some of the results are summarised in figure 2.2.

These results suggest that Australian attendance patterns have followed a similar course to those in the USA, albeit with much lower overall attendance levels. Church attendance in Australia appears to have declined from the mid 1960s plateauing out during the 1980s at a lower overall level. It has sometimes been suggested there has been an upturn in attendance during the last ten years. There is no evidence for this here. Given the uncertainties of

Figure 2.2 Church Attendance in Australia 1950–1984

Percentage Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources Various Social Surveys (see appendix 4 for details)

survey data, a variation of one or two percentage points is far from being statistically significant.

Denominational Differences

The overall attendance patterns mask changes in the percentage of the Australian population regularly attending each of the major denominations. A comparison of survey results from 1960 and 1983–84 reveals some dramatic changes.

An examination of the results in figure 2.3 suggests that *in 1983/84 the percentage of Australians who were regular attenders at Anglican, Uniting and Presbyterian churches had dropped to under half the level that existed in 1960*. The churches representing these denominations have become markedly more marginal to Australian life.

The percentage of Australians regularly attending Catholic mass has also declined albeit at a lesser rate. By contrast, the percentage of Australians in these two years who have regularly attended the range of churches covered by the 'Other Christian' category has stayed fairly constant. In part this may represent their greater ability to recruit and maintain their members. This could be particularly true of the Pentecostal churches and some other sects. However,

Figure 2.3 The Changing Shape of Australian Church Life

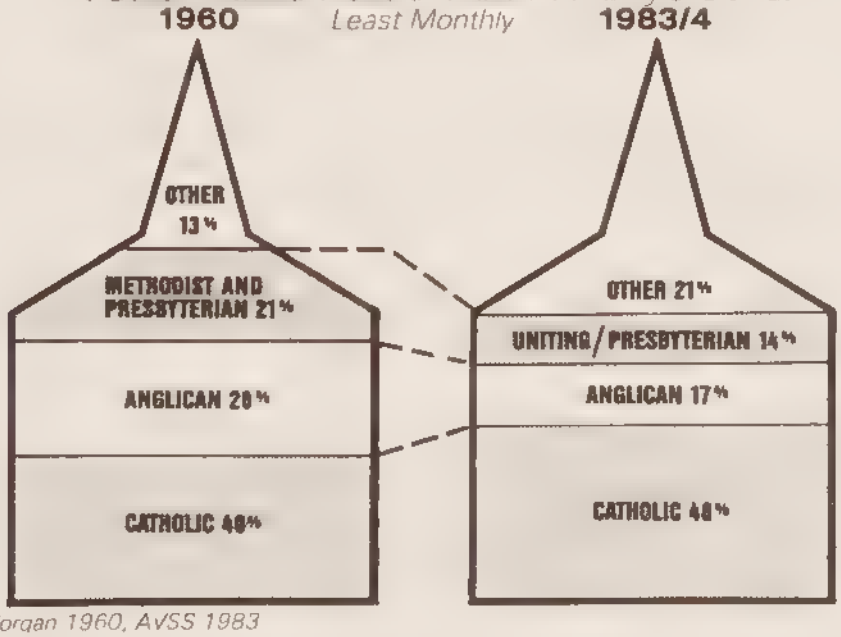
Percentage of Australian Population Attending Church at Least Monthly

Sources Morgan 1960, AVSS 1983

Note Figures have been weighted according to the denominational affiliation profiles of the 1961 and 1981 censuses. See appendix 4 for details.

Table 2.4 The Changing Face of Regular Church Attenders in Australia

The Denominational Profile of Those Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources Morgan 1960, AVSS 1983

Note Figures have been weighted according to the denominational affiliation profiles of the 1961 and 1981 Commonwealth Censuses. See appendix 4 for details.

the maintenance of the 'Other Christian' category is also due to a diversification of the churches under this heading, particularly with the growth of ethnic churches in this country.

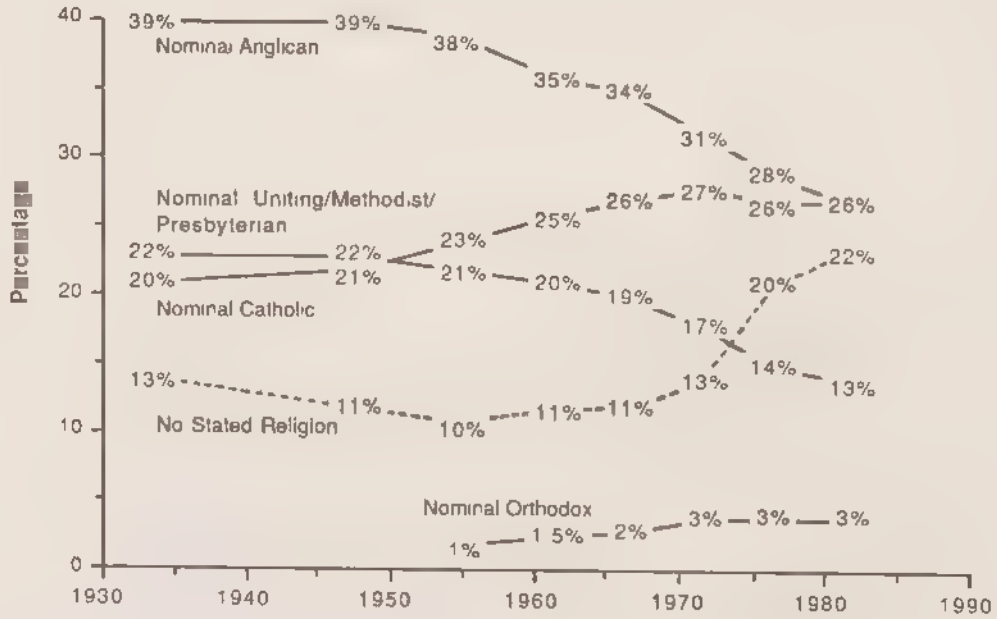
The period between 1960 and 1984 has therefore seen not only a declining percentage of Australians claiming regular church attendance but also the changing face of those that do attend In the 1980s regular attenders are more likely to be Catholic and there is a greater diversity of denominational groups.

There have been two distinct factors operating to produce the changing fortunes for the different denominations *Firstly there have been changes in the nominal affiliation of Australians* At the Commonwealth census, Australians are asked for their religious affiliation. The changes over fifty years are shown in figure 2.5

The picture of religious adherence has changed markedly. *The percentage of nominal Catholics has increased, largely due to the patterns of post war migration Mainline Protestants have declined in their share of the Australian population At the same time the percentage not claiming any religious affiliation has increased over the last ten to fifteen years to nearly one quarter of the population* The question of who comprises this latter group becomes an important aspect of understanding church life in Australia and will be dealt with in subsequent chapters.

Figure 2.5 The Changing Face of Religious Affiliation in Australia

Percentage Claiming Nominal Affiliation at the Census



Source Australian Bureau of Statistics, Commonwealth Census 1933 81

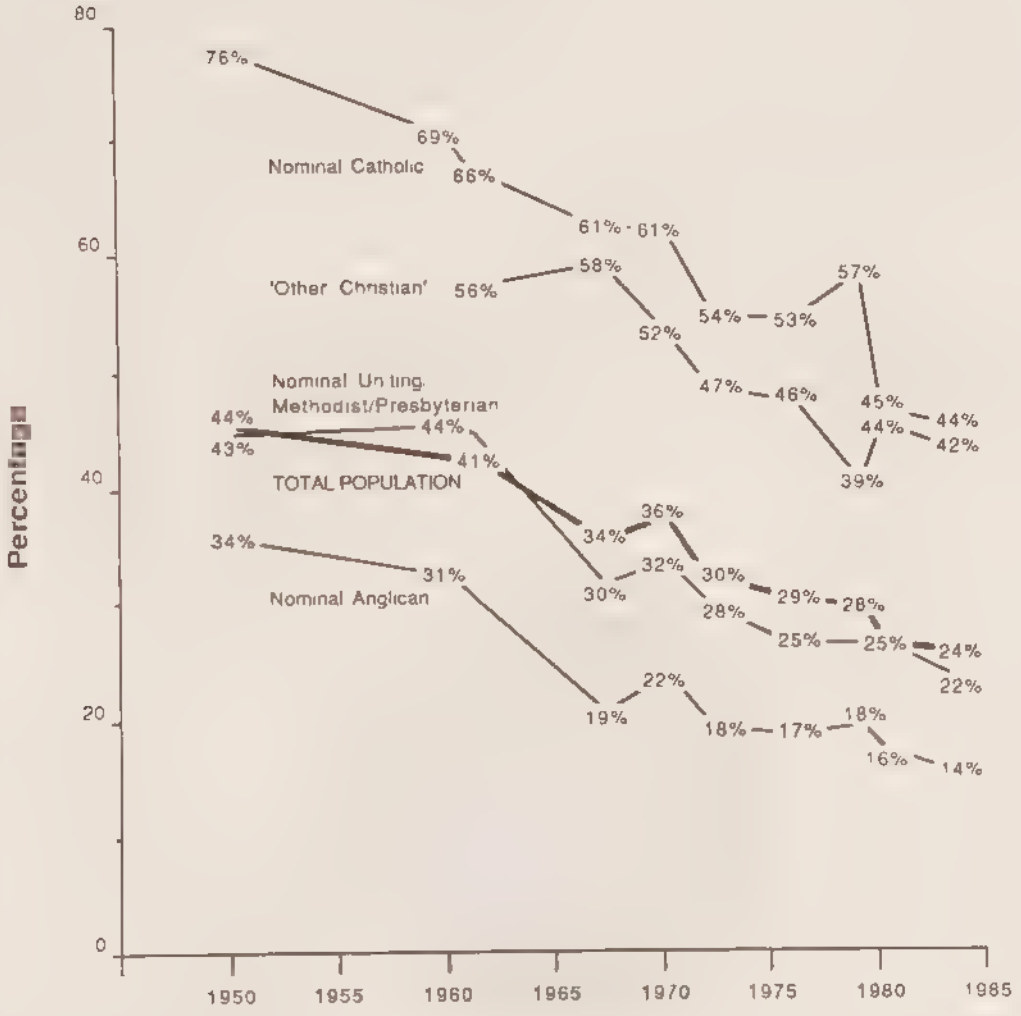
Beyond the changing nominal affiliation of Australians, the attendance rates of those within the major denominations have also declined over the last thirty-five years.

The decline in attendance amongst nominal Catholics has been fairly continuous during the period. This decline has been partially masked within Catholicism by its increasing nominal base.

The Anglican and Uniting Methodist Presbyterian attendance rates appear to have been reasonably stable during the 1950s, declining more rapidly until the early 1970s, and stabilising again in the late 1970s. Whether this reflects an end to church decline must remain an open question. It is possible that the 'no stated religion' group in the census results include disillusioned

Figure 2.6 Levels of Church Attendance Amongst Major Denominations 1950–1983

Percentage Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source Various Social Surveys (see appendix 4 for details)

ex-mainline Protestants. There is some support for this in the work of Michael Hogan (1979, 397). The fact that mainline attendance rates have stopped declining could be interpreted as the result of an increasing number of previously nominally affiliated people starting to claim no religion.

The results for the 'Other Christian' category also tend to suggest a decline in attendance rates, although one must be rather cautious with this given the variety of groups in this category.

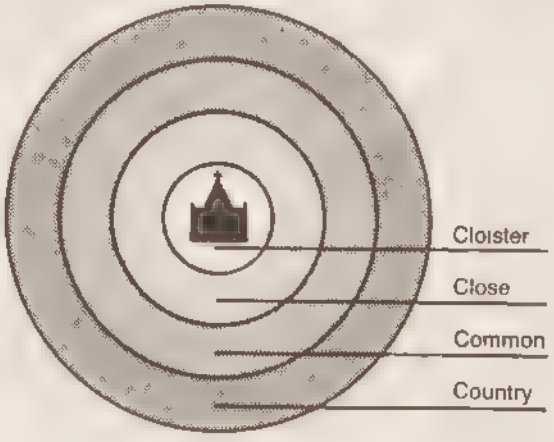
CONCLUSIONS: CHANGING TIMES/CHANGING FORTUNES

It is evident from this chapter that church life in Australia is not a static phenomenon. The last twenty years have seen changes in many ways; the churches must look closely at the changes that are taking place around them and to them.

John Bodicomb uses a simple scheme to describe the different levels of involvement in organised religion He describes four general levels of involvement (1984, 16) First there is the *cloister*, a zone near the centre of church life inhabited by those with clear, conscientious and regular commitment. Secondly there is the *close*, adjacent to the church cloisters but outside the inner heart Irregular attenders and people with a fringe involvement come into this category. Then comes the *common* The nominal adherents of the various denominations fit into this category. Those on the common are familiar with what happens in the cloister but have little to do with it. Finally there is the *country*, an expanse inhabited by those with no connection to the cloister, indifferent to it and living independently of it.

The changing shape of church attendance described in this chapter can readily be understood in terms of this simple model For a church to grow, there must be a ready source of people inhabiting all levels, capable of coming

Figure 2.7 Levels of Involvement in Organised Religion



Source Bodicomb (1984, 16)

closer in to the life of the church Anglican and mainline Protestant churches face declines in *cloister*, *close* and *common*. For the Catholic church the problem is not with the *common*; migration patterns have seen to that. Rather, the last twenty five years have revealed problems in attracting people from *common* to *close* to *cloister* For all the churches there is the issue of the *country* — apparently containing about half the Australian population — well beyond the life of the churches.

Church attendance is a minority pursuit in Australia — albeit a significant minority Even if survey estimates of attendance are to be accepted at face value, and there can be little doubt that they are inflated, the churches represent but one section of a pluralistic society.

The Bodicomb model suggests that religion has an impact beyond those who are regular attenders The churches represent an institutional dimension of religious life institutions which seek to introduce a religious factor into the thinking of the wider society and to help members of that society understand their religious experiences. Understanding church life must therefore also include an understanding of other aspects of religious orientation — beliefs, religious experiences and so on — in the lives of Australians.

It is to this wider canvas that we turn in the following chapter.

3

OTHER ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

Religion is experienced by people in many different ways. Some people have had highly emotional experiences of the supernatural in their lives; others see religion more in terms of doctrine or moral codes by which to live; Still others see religion in terms of the fellowship of like believers. There are many with a religious orientation who do not regularly attend church. Then again there are many for whom religion is completely irrelevant.

Church attendence is but one dimension of religious orientation — an institutional dimension. It would appear that it is not doctrinal issues or lack of belief alone that keep the unchurched from becoming more involved in church life. Rather it would seem to represent a lack of motivation to become part of an institutional representation of religious beliefs and orientation.

Let me introduce you to some typical Australians. They have had very different life experiences religion has a variety of meanings in their lives.

First there is Sarah. Sarah is a product of a church family in one of the dormitory suburbs of a large city. She grew up a dutiful attender to please her parents. It was an experience she found quite sterile and without life — quite a contrast to the colours, life and texture of her experiences in the Australian bush. Through holidays, bush walking, a degree in biology and a job with the National Parks and Wildlife Service she came to be deeply involved with Australian wilderness. She gained more than just adventure from these experiences. Somehow it taught her a sense of place in God's creation. In the handiwork of the Creator she discovered and experienced the nature of the Creator in a way that her parents and fellow church goers did not comprehend. Leaving the church and its emphasis on repressive moral codes behind, she came to discover and embrace the philosophies of the conservation movement. For Sarah this provides the fellowship and framework to give expression to her experience of God in nature.

Unlike Sarah, Robert grew up in the country, the son of a well-to-do grazier. Teenage years for him meant a life in the city, boarding at a prestigious church school. There he was taught about religion and participated in the religious life of the school. He took over from his father the running of the family property and in time became actively involved in civic groups and rural politics. For Robert the beliefs he learnt at school became the basic rules for life, the essential ethical principles for being a good citizen. In this way his beliefs are important to him, even though throughout school he had cared little for the more emotional parts of religious life. Back on the property he has embraced the beliefs and codes but does not attend church regularly. It is important to him, though, that his children attend the same church school.

Doreen had quite a different experience of life. The product of a broken home, she had been a real Aussie battler. With her husband she has brought up seven children. It wasn't easy, as her husband had often been out of work. Religious faith played a very important part in Doreen's life. It was a primitive faith by many standards based only on a year or two at Sunday school, where she had been sent to get her out of the way. Yet somehow from such mustard-seed beginnings that primitive faith has grown within the privacy of her mind and soul. Her faith has pulled her through times of struggle. She has fervent beliefs and an active prayer life.

But Doreen does not attend church as an adult. In fact she has probably never even considered doing so. Her husband hates the church and has no interest in religious things. Church is largely for the well to-do. Anyway, she is much too busy and probably has nothing suitable to wear.

Finally there are Geoff and Brian. Geoff is a young doctor. Brought up in an affluent fun loving home, Geoff is enjoying the many pleasures that his new found status and money can afford him. Success in life for him is measured in terms of career and enjoyment. Weekends are spent on the windsurfer and holidays in the snow. He has never given much thought to religion and, apart from his wedding and his father's funeral, he has never been inside a church.

The same is true for his mate Brian. Brian comes from a very different social stratum. He and his young family are trying hard to succeed and pay off

their first home He met Geoff through that great leveller — football. They both played in the same team and drank together at the pub. For both of them, religion is quite a different world It does not enter their consciousness; it has little significance in the way they put their lives together. The closest it came to entering their discussion was when a mate told them the story of how a minister and his family had come to live next door This mate liked the new young clergyman and had tried to be really helpful and assist him in setting up for some big church occasion. So helpful that he offered to provide the booze for the occasion! It was only after some red-faced explanations that he was made to realise his mistake!

Many Different Journeys

These short portraits present five different religious journeys The first three could be described by some measures as being religious people, although not in terms of church attendance. The last two had very little religious orientation; their lives had almost no point of interaction with religion or religious thought Of course there are many other types of religious stories that could be told by different Australians and many that would include an enthusiastic and regular involvement in the lives of the churches.

These stories serve to underline the differences in people's experiences and expressions of religion. The churches must recognise that there exists a variety of religious journeys.

In this chapter our concern is with the broader religious canvas as we seek to compare patterns of attendance with other aspects of religious orientation and, in so doing, provide a framework for the rest of the study To do this we have to rely largely on the Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS)

THE RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION OF AUSTRALIANS

The AVSS asked over twenty questions canvassing aspects of religious experience. In table 3.1 we see some of the patterns of response to these questions The full questions are given in appendix 2. The index of overall religious orientation combines all the variables into a single measure.

Whilst only 27 per cent of respondents claimed to attend church regularly (at least monthly), far more claimed to be religious when measured on some of the other indicators Over 40 per cent believe in a personal God and rate God as important in their lives whilst more than half the Australian population claim to have confidence in the church or consider themselves religious people.

The data in table 3 1 reveal significant differences between the responses of people with different denominational loyalties. Whilst there are significant differences on all questions, the differences between the denominational groups are greatest in the area of church attendance and membership and on the question of orthodoxy of beliefs (beliefs in God, the devil, heaven, hell, life after death,a soul and sin — see appendix 2 for details).

Table 3.1 Responses to Religious Questions in the AVSS (1983)

Denomination	*Anglican*	*Catholic*	*Uniting Methodist or Presbyterian*	*Other Christian*	*Rest*	*Total Population*
Members of church/ religious organisation	17%	39%	25%	51%	6%	26%
Voluntary work for church/religious organisation	9%	13%	11%	23%	2%	11%
Regular attenders at church	16%	46%	23%	52%	7%	27%
Pray regularly	24%	43%	30%	57%	21%	33%
Aware of supernatural power	25%	32%	27%	58%	25%	31%
Close to and affected by a powerful spiritual life force	12%	15%	18%	38%	15%	17%
Hold orthodox Christian beliefs	15%	38%	19%	48%	7%	24%
Believe the first three commandments are still relevant today	14%	37%	20%	42%	8%	23%
Believe the last seven commandments are still relevant today	56%	66%	63%	66%	33%	57%
Have confidence in the church as an institution	53%	74%	61%	72%	18%	56%
Believe in a personal God	34%	57%	38%	67%	15%	41%
Rate God as important in their lives	31%	59%	42%	67%	16%	41%
Are satisfied with their religious lives	20%	37%	29%	54%	22%	30%
Consider themselves religious people	50%	76%	58%	78%	29%	57%
Would die for their religious beliefs	2%	7%	4%	27%	3%	7%
Believe shared religious beliefs are important to a happy marriage	20%	24%	20%	39%	11%	21%
Believe it is important to teach children religious beliefs at home	15%	30%	22%	44%	10%	22%
Overall Religious Orientation	11%	30%	19%	46%	5%	20%

Note The figures given above for each question are the percentages claiming to be religious in each category. For information on the definition of regular attendance, prayer and so on, see appendix 2

As with attendance, those nominally affiliated to the Catholic church and those coded 'Other Christian' are most likely to claim to be religious on all questions. It is the religious community or tradition with which one is associated through which one comprehends and gives expression to religious experiences and values Many of those connected to the 'Other Christian' category are likely to have chosen to join these churches (e g charismatic/ Pentecostal churches) and are therefore much more likely to have highly religious orientations Baptists are also included here in this category With tight definitions of membership and clear and decisive theological orien tations, they tend to have higher percentages of strongly religious adherents The high Catholic rates are probably due to its stress on obedience and its strong forms of socialisation (such as Catholic schooling).

Changes over Time

This study has not had access to data that would enable an estimate to be given of the changes in levels of religious orientation over the last few decades What research has been done has suggested that levels of belief and private prayer have also declined alongside declining church attendance levels (Wilson 1983, McCallum 1986).

DIFFERENT WAYS OF BEING RELIGIOUS

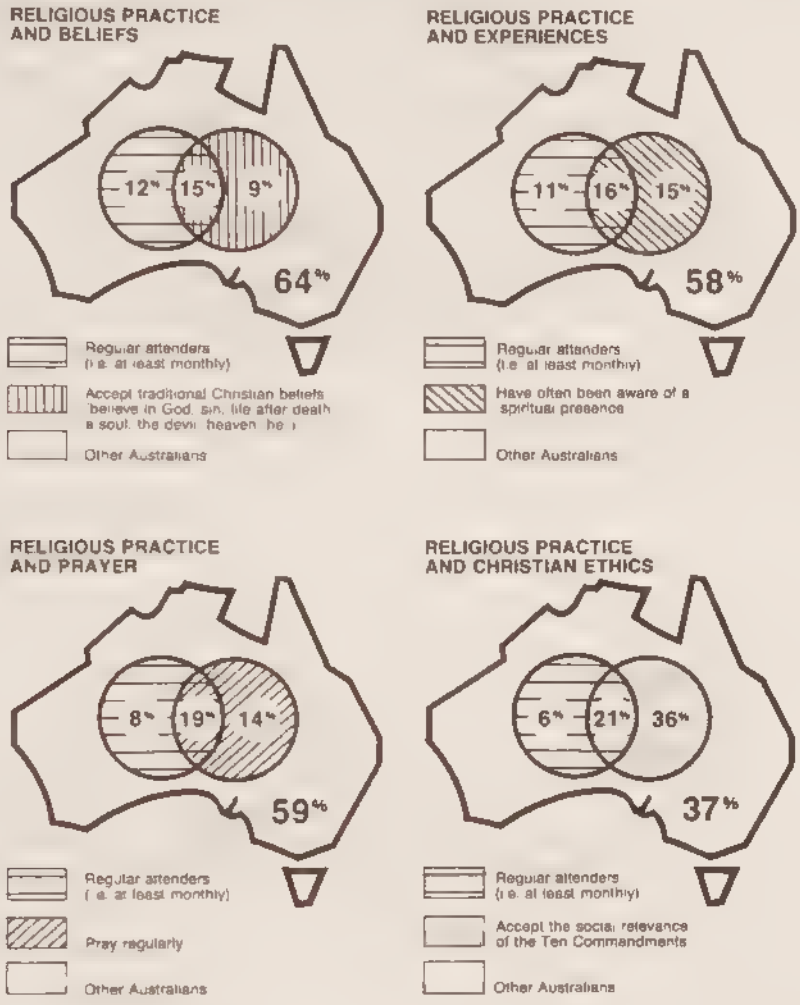
In many social surveys, a person's religious background and commitment are often dealt with in a single question Whilst this may be appropriate in some contexts, it has also resulted in gross simplification in others.

Religious variables often measure only one aspect of religious orientation Information on church attendance tells us little about beliefs, a person's beliefs may in fact keep us ignorant of their experiences of the supernatural In the post war period in America it became clear that no single measure could accurately describe the quality of religious life Researchers found an increase in attendance at the same time as an erosion in orthodox beliefs — an apparent paradox leading Herberg to conclude in the 1960s that 'America is at once the most religious and the most secularistic of nations' (Herberg 1955).

A central aspect of this study is the location of patterns of church attendance within the wider arena of religious orientation. In figure 3 2 we find a comparison of patterns of regular church attendance with those for several other religious variables.

This table can be of assistance to the churches in understanding the drift in and out of church life There clearly are many regular church attenders who would not be classified as highly religious if that were measured in another way Just under half of regular attenders do not hold to all conventional Christian beliefs, including a belief in God, the devil, heaven and hell, sin, a soul and life after death. A similar proportion do not claim to have often

Figure 3.2 Church Attendance and Other Aspects of Religious Orientation (1983)



Source AVSS

been aware of a 'spiritual presence' A little under one-third do not claim to pray regularly There is a sense in which these are the segments of the churches' constituency that are most at risk of slipping out of regular church attendance

The above figures may cause unease for many church planners and clergy. It is however also important to point out that figure 3 2 suggests that there is a catchment area of Australians who are not regular church attenders but, if measured by other standards, would be classified as religious people

About 30 per cent of Australians claim an awareness of a supernatural power, about half of whom do not translate that experience into regular church attendance It would appear that Sarah in our earlier examples is not alone in such a religious journey.

Indeed there is evidence from research in Britain and the United States that reports of ecstatic, paranormal or other experiences of the supernatural are by

no means confined to church-goers (Hay and Morisy 1978) There appear to be similarities in the level of reports of experiences in the two countries and some similar results for Australians have been reported (MacLeod-Morgan 1985) It is also clear from the overseas research that a person will not, as a result of such experiences, automatically join a church

Likewise there are many people who, like Brian in our pen portraits, hold to traditional Christian beliefs but do not attend church Nearly 10 per cent of Australians fit this category Around 14 per cent of the population pray regularly but are not regular church-goers.

For the churches it may be useful to know which Australians are those who accept conventional Christian beliefs or claim experiences of the supernatural but who do not attend church They might form a target group more amenable to potential church attendance This is a subject to which we shall return in later chapters.

The results in figure 3 2 suggest that between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of Australians reveal little religious orientation Such people, including Geoff and Brian from our portraits, are well distanced from involvement in the life of the churches.

TOWARDS A MODEL OF RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION

There has been a great deal of research into different dimensions of religious orientation The work of Charles Glock and Rodney Stark in the 1950s and

Table 3.3 Different Dimensions of Religious Orientation — The Glock and Stark Model

RITUAL INVOLVEMENT This dimension refers to religious practice Glock and Stark distinguished between public acts such as attendance at worship and private devotional activities such as prayer or meditation

IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION: This refers to people's beliefs about God and the traditional teachings of their churches. It has to do with the degree to which a person accepts as true the creeds of their faith In measuring this dimension Glock and Stark took as a primary measure the orthodoxy of an individual's beliefs. As secondary measures they look at the degree to which people believe that theirs is the one true faith and an ethicalism index which measured how important people felt it was to behave in a manner set down by the churches

INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION Here they were concerned with a person's knowledge of religious doctrine, the church's history and traditions, quite apart from their belief in or acceptance of them

EXPERIENTIAL DIMENSION This dimension is seen to reflect people's experiences of the supernatural. A religious experience could be as mild as feeling in the presence of a divine being or as strong as having a vision

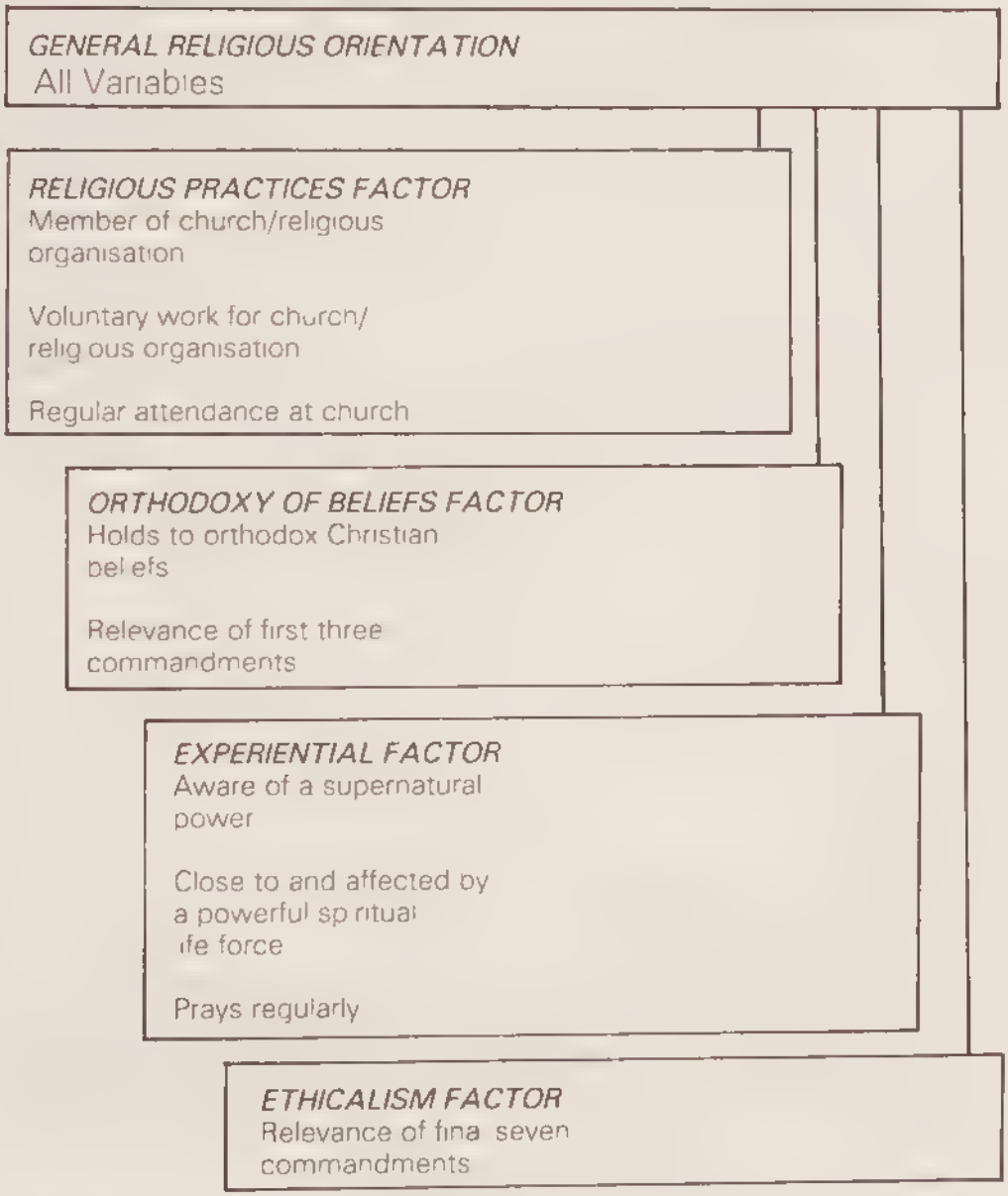
CONSEQUENTIAL DIMENSION Glock and Stark conceived this to be a measure of the effect that religion has on the rest of a person's life What are the consequences of religious beliefs, practices, knowledge or experience?

Source Glock 1965

1960s has been a landmark in the field. Whilst there have been some variations over time, the basic model contains five discrete religious dimensions as shown in table 3.3. This model has been a central focus of research over the years with many seeking to validate or improve upon it.

The AVSS data includes questions relating to several of Glock and Stark's dimensions and one can ask how well the data fits this model? Analysis of the relationship of these different religious variables to each other was

Table 3.4 The Multidimensional Model of Religious Orientation to Be Used in This Study


GENERAL RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION
All Variables
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES FACTOR
Member of church/religious organisation
Voluntary work for church/ religious organisation
Regular attendance at church
ORTHODOXY OF BELIEFS FACTOR
Holds to orthodox Christian beliefs
Relevance of first three commandments
EXPERIENTIAL FACTOR
Aware of a supernatural power
Close to and affected by a powerful spiritual life force
Prays regularly
ETHICALISM FACTOR
Relevance of final seven commandments

Note Twelve variables not listed above loaded only on the general religious orientation factor

Source AVSS (see appendix 2 for details of each variable)

carried out using two statistical techniques exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. It was found that the the model with the best fit included a general religious orientation factor with four sub dimensions roughly coinciding with Glock and Stark's ritual, experiential, ethicalism and orthodoxy of belief dimensions.

The model is presented below in table 3 4 and gives a general framework that can be used in the rest of this study. For those interested, the technical details of this model are given in appendix 2 This analysis lends some support to the Glock and Start model although the limitations of the AVSS data base must be borne in mind.

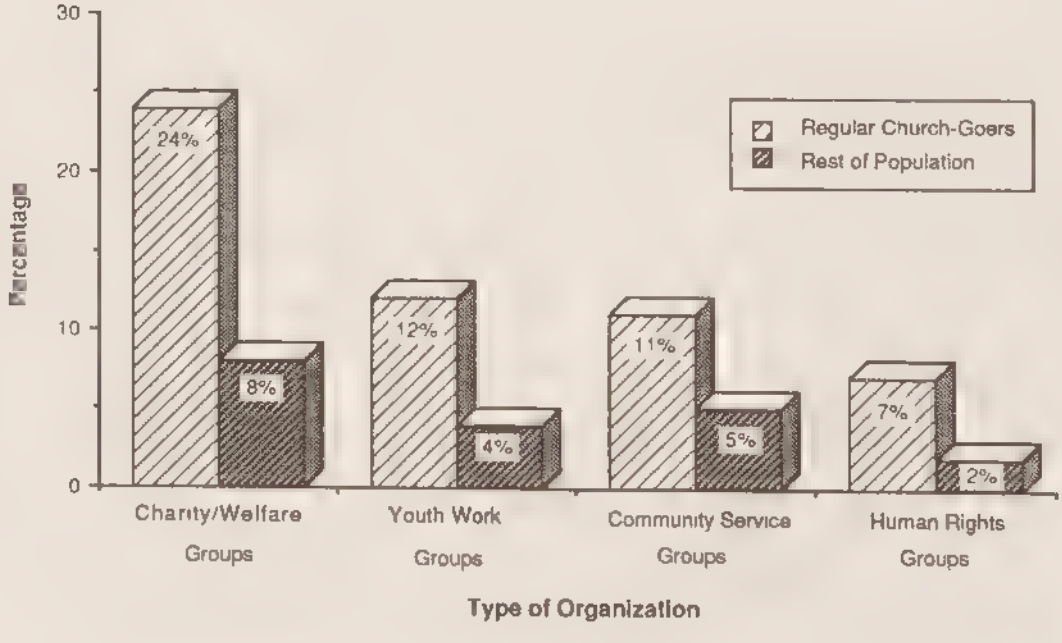
THE CHURCHES AS LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

In the local context, church attendance can be seen as participation in one of the most common formal associations that exist in a community But there are many other local residents' groups, sporting clubs and so on There have been various studies of participation in other local groups carried out The question can be asked How similar are the patterns of church attendance to patterns of participation in other local organisations? Are those people more likely to attend church also more likely to participate in other groups and organisations?

A similarity in the patterns of church attendance and participation in other local organisations has been found in a range of community studies both

Figure 3.5 Participation in Other Social Organisations (1983)

Percentage Who Are Members of Each Type of Organisation



Source AVSS

here and overseas (e g Gans 1967, Bryson and Thompson 1979) as well as in other studies Erich Goode (1966 1968) has argued that those inclined to attend non church meetings are also more likely to be church-goers.

We can test this, at least approximately using the AVSS data As can be seen from the data in figure 3 5 those who are church attenders are more likely to be members of other welfare, youth oriented and community service organisations This pattern does not hold for membership of sporting, educational or art groups.

We must be cautious with this result because it is not clear how local these organisations are However the result can encourage us to assume that patterns of church attendance are likely to be similar to patterns of participation in other organisations, a result also supported by Homel (personal communications) Patterns of church attendance are therefore also likely to be related to people s desire for social involvement, the nature of the churches as social institutions and people's ability to participate in formal organisations as well as to their religious perceptions.

CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter we outlined some of the general patterns of church attendance in Australia Here we have sought to set it within the broader religious canvas.

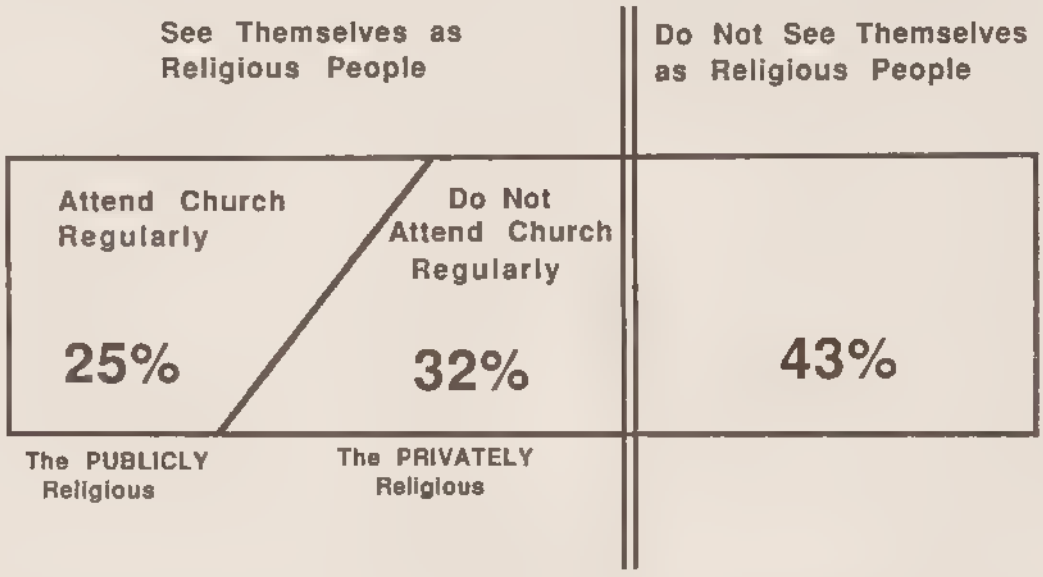
Reflecting on the 'Religion in Australia' survey of the mid 1960s Hans Mol made the following comment:

> Australia is no different from any other western nation. Here as elsewhere the ambiguous place of religion reflects the value orientations of western society . . . The fact that such a large percentage of Australians does not worship regularly but still 'believes in God without doubt' . . . fits the picture of ambiguity. As in Britain the goodwill towards religion is counter-balanced by a massive woolliness of thinking about it. Australia seems to be a Christian nation in search of a religion; or a heathen nation in flight from one (1971, 302).

The same can probably be said about Australia in the 1980s, although perhaps the pendulum has swung further away from a religious orientation in the intervening years There certainly are large sections of the Australian population who are highly secular in outlook and at the same time many who could not be so described

This picture is summarized in figure 3 6 In the AVSS respondents were asked whether they considered themselves to be 'religious persons' A little under half of the respondents did not see themselves as religious At the other end of the scale a quarter of the population were *publicly religious* — that is they saw themselves as religious and also attended church at least monthly. In between, one third of the population were *privately religious* — considering themselves to be religious but not attending church regularly.

Figure 3.6 The Religious Orientation of Australians



Note 1 'Regular' attendance here means at least monthly
Note 2 2% of the population did not see themselves as religious people but claimed regular church attendance

Source AVSS (1983)

Patterns of attendance are only one aspect of the religious orientation of Australians. As in other countries, patterns of beliefs and religious experiences are somewhat different although obviously related to attendance patterns. There would appear to be some regular attenders who do not hold to orthodox Christian beliefs or who do not claim to have experienced any supernatural presence. Of more importance there are many people holding conventional beliefs or claiming experience of the supernatural who do not choose to attend church regularly.

The results here highlight the fact that *non attendance at church is not always related to unbelief or lack of religious orientation. There can be many reasons why people might choose not to be regularly involved in the public and institutional dimension of religious life that have little to do with religious orientation.*

There has been little in-depth research into non attendance in this country. From a study of religion in a small rural community in Victoria, Kenneth Dempsey suggests that Protestants stay away from church because they feel it is irrelevant to their lives. Reasons given included a failure to get anything from services, other commitments and hypocrisy in various areas of church life (1983a, 29).

Of research carried out in the USA, one of the most well known is the work of Russel Hale in *Who Are the Unchurched?* In his report published in

Table 3.7 A Classification of the 'Unchurched'

Type 1: The Anti-Institutionalists. Reject the church's preoccupation with its own maintenance and self interest. They feel they can be 'better' Christians outside the churches.
Type 2: The Boxed-In. Have left the church because they found its life too confining.
Type 3: The Burned Out. Former church goers who feel utterly drained by their previous church involvement. Perhaps they felt used or now simply desire to be free of responsibilities.
Type 4: The Cop-Outs. Former church-goers who have never really had any deep commitment to the churches. Their contact was peripheral. They may have been apathetic or simply drifters.
Type 5: The Happy Hedonists. Find fulfilment in life in the pursuit of worldly pleasures. They see no need for church attendance.
Type 6: The Locked Out. Feel the church has closed its doors on them. May be due to their life style, minority status or because they are divorced or separated; they feel either rejected or neglected.
Type 7: The Nomads. Move from place to place so often that they never settle into the life of a church.
Type 8: The Pilgrims. Feel their religious beliefs are still in a process of formation. They want to survey all options before making any commitments.
Type 9. The Publicans. By far the most common group. They see church people as hypocrites and phonies. They feel that Christians are no better than other people.
Type 10: The Scandalised. Reject the church because they see it as divided and factionalized.
Type 11: The True Unbelievers. Have a thought out lack of belief.
Type 12: The Uncertain. Have no idea why they don't attend church.

(Source Hale Who Are the Unchurched? 1977)

1977. Hale makes quite clear the difference he found between 'unchurched' and unbelief' Many of the former still held to Christian beliefs. Their lack of involvement in the church was, in the main, not due to doctrinal difficulties or doubts (1977, vi). Hale developed a typology of the 'unchurched' which is shown in table 3.7.

The replies given to Hale reflect largely on the churches as local institutions. Other studies have come to similar conclusions (e g Hoge 1981). One of Hale's central conclusions is that, in the USA, church attendance is related to social bonding to the local community (1977, 89) The unchurched are largely responding to the churches as local institutions Their decisions about non-involvement relate more to institutional than direct religious issues These are issues to be examined in later chapters.

For the churches this chapter provides some important insights. Firstly there must be a recognition that an increasing percentage of the Australian population has slipped right out of contact with the churches To use Bodicomb's model introduced in the last chapter, more people are outside in the *country* This group will be quite unfamiliar with religious concepts, jargon

and norms. If churches are seeking to relate to this group they will need to do so in terms that can be understood by people with little or no religious socialisation. The concept of Australia as a 'Christian' society — in which one could assume all members had been given some form of religious instruction — is now long since past.

At the same time this chapter suggests that a religious orientation exists amongst a majority of the Australian population, far more than attend church regularly. There is a religious factor in Australian life. In many cases the reasons for non-participation in church life are related, not to beliefs or lack of religious experience, but to the nature of the churches as institutions. For some it may be a question of deep seated distrust of the churches, for others it may be far more mundane. If the churches can work at understanding the nature of these barriers they may become better able to reach and relate to large segments of the Australian population.

In later chapters an attempt will be made to isolate groups who are less likely to attend church but who are otherwise no less predisposed to having a religious orientation. In the following chapter, however, we shall look at some of the factors that other writers have suggested to explain the changing face of religious life in this country and build a theoretical model for understanding the pressures and possibilities faced by the churches amidst the diversity of modern Australian life.

4

BEYOND THE GRAND THEORIES — TOWARD A MODEL OF THE CHURCH IN MODERN SOCIETY

There have been many theories put forward to explain the declining levels of church attendance during the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter presents some of the more common explanations.

Whilst these theories do contain important insights they are also rather limited in their practical value because they are so general. In the second half of this chapter a model of the interaction between church and community is developed which provides a framework for interpreting the results of the rest of the study.

Writers on the Australian context have suggested various explanations for the changing fortunes of the churches. There has been no shortage of attempts. David Millikan listed about a dozen in an article (1981b). And, as an overseas commentator has put it: Any meeting of church leaders in one hour could fill four walls with newsprint listing factors and theories (Hoge 1979, 93)[1]

EXPLAINING THE CHANGING FORTUNES OF THE CHURCHES — SOME 'GRAND THEORISING'

In the first part of this chapter we shall focus on some of these theories One of the most common suggests that church life has never come to terms with Australian culture.

Religion with an Australian Accent

A great many observers in the 1970s drew attention to what they saw as a gap between Australian culture and the life and teachings of the churches They called for the earthing of Australian church life in Australian experiences, attitudes and culture Catch cries such as 'religion with an Aussie accent' or the need for a 'gum leaf' theology became, and still are, fashionable within certain sectors of Australian Christendom.

The most visible promoter of such ideas has been David Millikan. He produced both a book and a television series on the subject entitled *The Sunburnt Soul* (1981a). His work portrayed rich images of Australian life — the pub, the bronzed Aussie on the beach, the desert, the ocker comedian, the bush — and saw mainstream church life as quite unrelated to these themes. He asked why, when more people go to church than attend football matches, talking about God and religion is taboo amongst Australians (1981b, 9). *The Sunburnt Soul* was presented in a very personal way as Millikan sought to explain to himself why he found life with the church difficult· 'I know there are many people who share my experience of being committed to, but frustrated by, the religious life the churches offer' (1981a, 12).

For Millikan, the churches in Australia have sought to duplicate church life back in the mother country. They have not yet understood how to communicate the gospel in a way which is earthed in the Australian context; those outside the church 'do not hear a message which reverberates with the sounds and rhythms of Australian culture' (1981b, 187).

A central theme of such writings is the *derivative* nature of religion in Australia. Most denominational traditions and patterns have been brought to Australia from other countries and adapted little to the Australian context. Until well into this century church leaders were still trained outside Australia It is only a few years since the Anglican Church here ceased to be the 'Church of England' Commentators such as Ronald Conway have observed that healthy grass-roots Christianity never got firmly established in Australia. From penal days church goers were regarded as establishment hypocrites (1985, 40). Theologian Alan Loy agrees. Religion was only partly here at our origins and as it became part of the Australian scene it was more as transferred institutions than as a formative factor in the new society (1979, 13).

Underlining such analysis is the question of *relevance*. One pastor, in a critique of *The Sunburnt Soul*, put it as follows. 'So why are we as the People of God here? Is it to find out what Australians want from the church and then give it to them? Is it to discern the cultural style of Australia and ape it — throwing in a bit of religion for good measure?' (Stuart 1982, 44).

To what extent should the churches seek to communicate their message within the social context of their audience? Or how much is their message fixed? At the other end of the spectrum is the example of determined fundamentalist street preachers who shout their message regardless of whether anyone is listening. In such a model the onus is on the hearer; the church has done its sacred duty if it makes the information available (Sharpe 1983, 62).

No doubt different denominations and church traditions would answer quite differently the question about when the sanctity of the message is compromised in a search for relevance. Many theologians from different backgrounds have pointed out how common understandings of doctrine become encapsulated within a cultural package which, while appropriate to that culture, cannot be directly translated to another. Such arguments suggest that an understanding of Australian culture would not simply assist the churches in communication, but would also provide new insights into the nature of faith and the essence of the message itself. The *relevance* question is one that will reappear throughout this study as the patterns of church attendance and the effect of social context on participation in church life are explored.

Understanding culture may also affect the way churches present their message. A recent paper from Fusion Australia suggests that Australians tend to be pragmatic rather than idealistic. 'Australians tend to think in terms of the concrete rather than the abstract, and very often thought forms that are used to express the Christian message are alien to them . . . What an Australian needs is a model. Once it's seen in action they are quite capable of recognising its meaning' (1986). The paper acknowledges that these strands of the Australian identity make western Christian traditions rather difficult to handle. However it argues that the way the Australian mind works, rather than standing in the way of biblical Christianity, harmonises well with the teaching methods and style of Jesus and the biblical writers.

The proponents of the need for a truly Australian church life have not been without their critics. Bruce Wilson has described it as being a sidetrack to a clear understanding of the reasons for declines in church attendance because such declines are not just limited to the Australian context (1983). Eric Sharpe is scathing in his criticisms. He suggests that the words 'religion' and 'culture' have in common the fact that 'among the hordes of those who use them, depressingly few seem to want to take the time and trouble to clarify what they mean by them'(1983, 61). He sees the images of Australian culture as rather crude caricatures and suggests that all English-speaking countries have become a meeting ground of cultures, possessing little overall identity of their own (1981, 23).

Herein lies the major inadequacy of the theory. It is perhaps going too far to suggest that Australia has no cultural identity of its own. Nevertheless, it is clear that one has to recognise that Australian life includes a diversity of cultures. Perhaps we need to differentiate between aspects of our *national cultural identity* and the *internal cultural mosaic* that is life in any given local

community. On that basis the arguments for 'Australianising' church life are a useful first step to a broader theoretical perspective.

As this study will show, *there are certainly many different cultural groups making up Australian society and many different social contexts in which churches seek to operate. Perhaps the issue of relevance has to be seen as a highly multi faceted issue, relating to the Australian context should really be a question of relating to the many Australian contexts.*

The Secularisation Ogre

Many commentators on the church and religion have sought to apply concepts of secularisation to the Australian situation. The term 'secularisation' is used in many different ways by different sociologists to describe processes that lead to a decline in the significance of churches and religion in modern societies. Much that has been written here derives from discussion and debate overseas to which only passing reference can be made. For some, secularisation foreshadows the end of organised religion, others do not accept such dire predictions.

It is important to recognise that various theorists often start with different definitions of 'secularisation'. To give three examples of these: first, secularisation can be seen as a process of increasing abstention from religious practice or secondly as a process of separation of the religious from other political, legal and economic institutions. Thirdly, it can be seen as the increasing substitution of a secular world view for a religious one. David Martin argues that evidence for the first two is often wrongly assumed to be evidence for the third (1969: 9). Further he suggests that the concept is 'less a scientific concept than a tool of counter religious ideologies'. Sociologist Peter Glasner likewise sees secularisation as an essentially ideological tool (1977).

Secularisation is, therefore, a very difficult notion. In discussing it one can note theories in which secularisation is an inevitable and irreversible process or else one can point to theories in which secularisation is improbable or impossible. Largely the differences turn not just on how one defines secularisation but also on how one defines religion. To take the extremes as examples, to define religion in terms of active church involvement would mean that secularisation must erode religious practice. On the other hand, if 'religion' is defined as that which gives ultimate meaning to every individual, then 'secularisation' becomes impossible by definition (Hill 1976, 228).

By far the best known work on this theme in this country has been Bruce Wilson's book *Can God Survive in Australia?* published in 1983. He argues that the decline in church attendance has been an inevitable effect of industrialisation and secularisation processes in modern urban societies. In Wilson's view the whole product the church has been offering — its practices, religion and God himself — are seen as irrelevant in people's lives. The social differentiation created by modern society pushes religion from a central place to become a private affair of individual choice. Following the leads of

sociologist Thomas Luckman he suggests that in a consumer society people can choose the goods and services they fancy (1983, 56) Religion becomes one choice amongst many in the expanding leisure market!

In addition, he has also suggested (1979, 22) that increasing multiculturalism in this country has made Australians more aware of religious alternatives to mainline Christianity The experimentation over the last fifteen years with various religions and sects underlines an increasing recognition of the range of religious options that are available He suggests that the image of the churches has shifted from an all embracing, sacred canopy to look more like a speciality shop catering for a narrow range of customers (1983, 52)

In Wilson's view modern industrial societies do not look to religion for explanation of life s mysteries but rather resort to an unshakable belief in science; it is a common perception that science has 'disproved' religion (1983, 75) Whereas, in setting sail for America the Pilgrim Fathers would have bowed in prayer for a safe journey, the pilot of a modern airliner is far more likely to check his instrument panel and get a weather update from the control tower (1983, 8)!

Jim Donaldson (1979) talks of this in terms of a 'framework shift' that has been taking place in religious thought since the Middle Ages. The shift, he suggests, has been from a God centred view of life to a scientific world view. Such a shift was well advanced in western society before the foundation of white settlement in Australia in 1788 Many sections of society were already removing themselves from the domination of religious institutions and symbols He sees in nineteenth century Australia a competition between the two world views and suggests that as time wore on the churches became increasingly defensive, looking backwards at periods of greater influence.

Some would see the logical conclusion of such lines of argument to be the eventual demise of the churches and the religious dimension in Australian life Others find that a rather unlikely scenario.

John Bodicomb is one Australian commentator who is dubious about the future of the church yet has no doubt about the religious essence of Australians He cites as evidence the relatively high rates of belief, the continued importance of rites of passage, the interest in new religious movements and elements of Australian 'folk' religion Invisible religion is alive and well he claims, exerting some influence on the values, hopes and dreams of the larger society (1984, 60).

Gary Bouma also takes issue with notions of secularisation and with those predicting the demise of the churches, suggesting 'the myth about in the land that the churches are an endangered species of social organisation' has little substance He argues that attendance for Anglicans in Melbourne has been increasing since 1976 and suggests that the patterns of attendance and decline vary for different denominations Concerning the overall changes in attendance levels since the 1950s, Bouma argues that there has never been a golden age for religion in Australia He suggests that the declines in attendance rates of the 1960s and 1970s should be seen as fluctuations of very little consequence and that levels of attendance have remained fairly constant in

Australia since 1860 (1983, 21) For Bouma there clearly is a religious factor operating in the lives of most Australians today (Bouma and Dixon 1986)

The secularisation debate is both important and dangerous. It is important because there are changes occurring in the overall fabric of modern society. It is dangerous because it is such a grand generalisation that it can be far removed from application to any real world situation.

Writers on secularisation often provide a broad backdrop but tend not to explain how the process of secularisation operates. Such analysis is often fairly unhelpful to the churches in that it is not at all clear how they should respond. Wilson, for instance, asserts that Christians should find ways to combat the causes of irreligion (1983, 27) He suggests that revival could come if there were a collapse of industrial society itself, if Australia were faced by military threat from Islamic or Marxist forces, if there were a collapse of moral values or a disillusionment with a purely materialistic lifestyle (1983, 43). In response to these suggestions one commentator, Peter Harrison, noted that 'the achievement of such conditions is somewhat beyond the resources of the average Christian' The difficulty of the secularisation approach for the churches is well put in his conclusion:

> In determining the question 'Can God survive in Australia?', Wilson has focussed on secular society. Had he directed his attention to the Christian community he would have arrived at an unambiguous 'yes'. Here lies the real miracle - that for all the forces militating against Christian belief there are ordinary Australians who still profess that belief . . . It is here that we see God at work, and ultimately it is here . . . that we find the appropriate starting point for the answer to the question posed by the book (1983, 2).

This study does not intend to enter directly into the secularisation discussion. It is clear from the results in chapter 3 that one cannot baldly assert that Australians are highly secular in outlook or basically religious in orientation To talk in generalisations can all too easily end in an exercise in rhetoric where one side seeks to underline the secular attitudes and the other the religious orientation. We need to go beyond such a broad brush treatment As we shall see in later chapters the answer to questions about the religious or secular orientations of Australians will vary for different groups within Australian society If indeed there is a process of increasing secularised thinking taking place we need to understand more clearly how and why these changes are taking place and amongst which groups in our society it is most pronounced

It is only such an analysis that can really take our understanding of the religious orientation of Australians a step further It is only such detail that can be helpful to the churches as they seek to respond and work with the societies they are part of On their own, secularisation theories are so grand, all-encompassing and over-arching that they can tend to lose touch with reality.

The Church Growth Movement

A quite different approach to understanding church growth and decline has come from the Church Growth Movement The social changes and the decline in church attendance during the 1960s resulted in a great deal of pessimism and loss of heart The demise of the church was, in the minds of many, imminent and inevitable It was a matter of accepting the unavoidable The Church Growth Movement arose in the 1970s in no small part to react against such pessimism Based on the work in the third world of people such as Donald McGavran it sought to develop sound principles for church growth in America and in other nations Its focus was quite naturally on the aspects that the churches could most easily alter — the factors internal to their lives Optimism was a key note of much of their work Titles such as *Your Church Can Grow* (Wagner 1976) and *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (McGavran and Arn 1977) stand in stark contrast to titles such as *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (Winter, 1962) from the previous decade.

At its most optimistic the Church Growth movement argues that if the churches would organise themselves properly and in accordance with certain growth principles then even a church in the most difficult situation could grow and prosper These principles have come from analysis of 'successful' churches in a great many different countries and contexts. Several Australian writers have contributed to the literature on church growth including Gordon Moyes (1975), Robert Hillman (1981) and Reginald Klimionok (1984).

The Church Growth Movement has generated strong emotions both in support of and in reaction to their ideas Criticism has come from many fronts One of the most common criticisms is that numerical church growth is not necessarily the only criterion for the effectiveness of the churches. Sometimes in being true to their message churches may in fact lose members. Here the *relevance* versus *integrity of message* argument resurfaces in a new guise

There have been other theological objections and criticism has also come from those who feel the movement has not taken enough account of factors external to the life of churches, that they offer little hope to small struggling congregations not in the right social and economic positions for growth *As this study will show, social context does have a significant impact on church life As will be argued later, however, this does not mean church growth principles have no relevance to the Australian churches.* Clearly any model of church growth and decline must include an examination of factors within the life of the churches that either encourage or inhibit growth Reference will be made at different stages in this book to ideas stemming from the Church Growth Movement.

A Relationship between Beliefs and Decline?

During the 1950s and 60s the prevailing wisdom in the United States was that, in an era when liberal mainline churches were experiencing numerical growth, most denominational transfer of members was from theologically conservative

to more liberal mainline churches (e g. Stark and Glock 1968. 183) It was felt that such churches were more in tune with modern life.

The last twenty years however have seen some changes to these trends. Mainline churches were declining whilst those with more conservative theological orientations were holding their own or growing In chapter 2 we noted that in Australia the 'Other Christian' category had held its own whilst other denominational traditions were declining in their levels of attendance Whilst in part this may be due to growth amongst the Orthodox churches, it also reflects growth amongst conservative Protestant and Pentecostal groups.

One controversial theory for the growth of theoligically conservative churches has been put forward by Dean Kelley (1977) In essence he suggests conservative churches have grown because of their ability to provide a more clear cut message and sets of behaviour codes and to meet the ultimate meaning needs of their constituents In this way he brought into the discussion about church growth and decline the possibility that the *fortunes of churches* are related to the nature of their beliefs. In a world of increasing religious plurality, churches that were not clear on the nature and implications of their beliefs were less likely to be successful than those that were clear cut and decisive. In a society which has a growing number of institutions and organisations with which one can become involved, the churches must seek to understand what is their task or find themselves increasingly replaced by secular alternatives

Writers in other countries have supported Kelley's thesis. Observers in Canada (e g Bibby 1978) and the United Kingdom (Bruce 1983) have suggested that declining church attendance has had a more damaging effect on the more broadly based denominations than on conservative Protestant groups.

However both these studies suggest that the effect is largely unrelated to people well outside of church life Conservative churches have better rates of *retention* of their members than mainline denominations and they have on balance gained more members through inter church transfer This is an issue we shall touch upon briefly in a later chapter Should such an observation hold more widely it would tend to signal widespread dissatisfaction amongst ordinary church members with the lack of clarity of the message that is presented to them.

These theories are valuable because they introduce an important element into considerations of the growth and decline of church attendance rates — the relationship between doctrinal orientation and patterns of attendance It is no doubt an element that will create unease amongst many church people who would quickly claim that the message cannot be twisted to simply please the audience That is a very real issue but one that is beyond the scope of this study.

Other critics of Kelley have argued that he tends to ignore other external factors which affect growth and decline Later chapters will show that the attendance levels of various denominations, including some which could be

classified as theologically conservative, vary between different types of communities. *The question of the relationship between beliefs and church growth and decline is important, yet it is by no means the sole factor at work.* The picture is much more complex in a society where, at the same time as we see a relative increase in attenders at churches with more conservative theological orientations, we also find an increase in people claiming no religious affiliation! Whilst not necessarily suggesting a causal relationship, it is evident yet again that a process of change and, possibly, of polarisation is taking place.

Beyond the Grand Theories

There are many other suggestions put forward to explain the changes in overall attendance patterns. Some have suggested people drift from the church during easy times, others that it is a pruning of the half hearted and so on.

Many would look to quite a different kind of explanation, that churches are not growing as they ought because of their lack of dependence on God. When God's people really start to depend on Him, then the churches will be bursting at the seams.

Such an explanation is beyond the realm of this study although an important issue for the churches. A need for greater dependence on God need not, however, imply that church people should not also look closely at what they do and why.

It has been encouraging to see the increasing interest in understanding patterns of church attendance. As Jackson Carroll comments on the American context (1978: 72), there is no doubt some truth in most of the explanations, yet any one of them taken separately oversimplifies what is a complex phenomenon. Increases and decreases in church attendance over the last thirty years have had multiple causes. There are also denominational differences.

But more, there are regional and local variations. *The church functions primarily as a local institution and therefore the local context is of great importance. In some communities churches are growing, in others they are declining. The ideas presented in this section have largely been broad-brush, macro theories. The local context is affected by macro patterns but it is also influenced locally by many other factors.* To understand the churches and their fluctuating fortunes requires a wide range of insights and observations from many different vantage points.

Understanding the place of the churches in Australian life is best started at a local level, examining the pressures and forces operating in a local situation and developing, from the ground up, a more general model. In the following section we sketch such a model to which we shall return at various stages throughout the study.

TOWARD A MODEL OF THE CHURCH IN MODERN SOCIETY

The fundamental question in assessing the future of any given church is the nature of its relationship with the wider community of which it is a part. We noted in chapter 2 that for a church to grow it needed to be drawing people through various stages of awareness of and involvement in its life.

The growth or decline of a church will be directly related to its **degree of connectedness** with the wider community. We shall return to aspects of this but first we need to look more closely at the interface between the church and community and the various factors at work shaping each.

Factors Shaping the Local Community

It is a central theme of this study that factors shaping the local community will also significantly affect church life.

In a modern society the local context is shaped by a range of factors, some local in origin, but most the result of larger macro-social forces. Australia is one of the most **urbanised** nations in the world and our society is being continually moulded by the processes of **urbanisation**. One central theme of these processes is **segregation**. The housing market segregates people according to what they can afford. It thus separates people by race, socio-economic status and stage in life. Each of the different communities so generated develops its own specific cultures, values and peer group norms. Each presents its own specific context in which a church seeks to operate.

Another central characteristic of urbanisation is **changing land use.** Paddocks become towns or overflow housing estates of cities or large regional centres. Stable dormitory suburbs become more industrialised or impacted by expanding business districts or medium density housing. Inner city housing may become rejuvenated or be used to accommodate recently arrived migrants. Local churches planted generations ago often find themselves having to face a rapidly changing population that may or may not be open to church participation.

Any local community will be made up of several social groupings, each with their own values and culture. Often such groups are mistrustful or even occasionally hostile to each other, particularly where ethnic differences are involved. A church will need to understand the **cultural components of their local community** as well as the more universal characteristics of Australians.

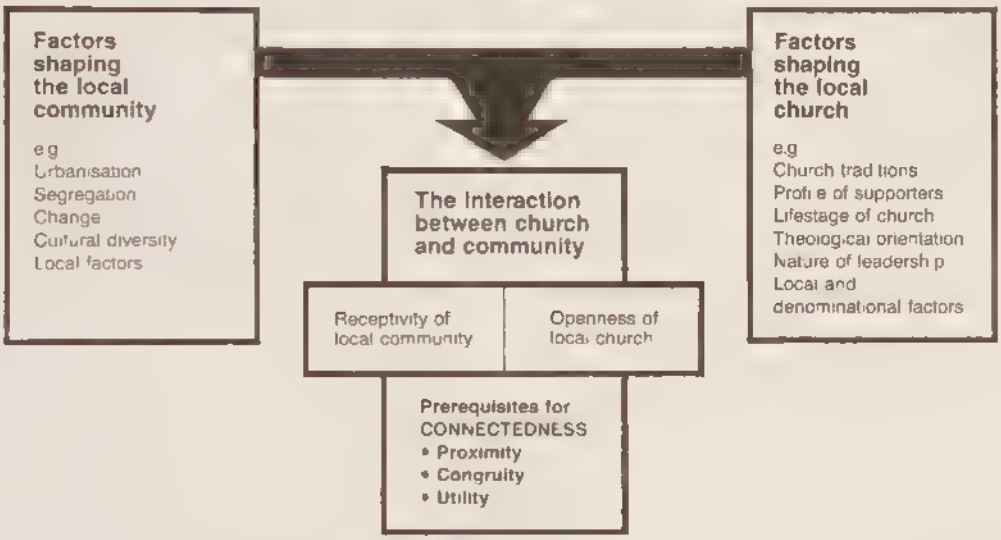
Finally the nature of the local community will be shaped by **wider social changes.** Factors such as increased mobility, more leisure time, the media, video machines, changing patterns of workforce participation, and philosophic shifts all impact the local situation.

All these factors (and, no doubt, others) work together to create the local community and the cultural mosaic it contains. There will also be many other **local factors.** Within this complex web, patterns of community life are formed, relationships and networks built, a sense of belonging developed (or

not developed!), grapevines created and local leadership and spokespersons nurtured. It is in the midst of this shifting, evolving web that a church seeks to maintain and develop its place. It is from this web that a church seeks to draw a membership and to develop an openness to a wider constituency.

Many of these factors will be examined in more detail in part 2 of this study along with their impact on patterns of church attendance. They are summarized diagrammatically in figure 4.1. Let us now direct our attention to some of the factors affecting the nature of the church life at a local level.

Figure 4.1 Factors Affecting Growth and Decline in a Local Church



Factors Affecting the Local Church

The nature of a local church will be significantly shaped by **denominational traditions.** There will be a range of ways things have been done in the past as well as norms regarding acceptable and unacceptable forms of ministry. Each denomination is likely to have developed its own priorities and forms of training for its leadership.

These traditions in turn are likely to be affected by **the social make up of the denomination's active constituency.** Most churches have sprung from a particular cultural subgroup within a society. It may be amongst a particular ethnic group, from amongst people of like socio economic status, from a particular region or with some common concerns. Such groups will express

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their faith and church life in their own ways It is likely that certain groups are more likely to be attracted into attendance than others This in turn is likely to reinforce the emphasis and style of the denomination.

A social organisation goes through various stages in its development A young movement grows to maturity ages and may eventually decline The church is no exception. Each of the **lifestages of the denomination** are likely to be accompanied by different levels of organisation enthusiasm and various degrees of flexibility

There are many other denominational factors that can influence the nature of a local church One more must be mentioned, particularly in the light of Dean Kelley's theories highlighted earlier in this chapter The **theological and doctrinal orientation** of a denomination must also exert an impact on the local church.

More local factors are at work as well. The **social profile of the congregation** will have a powerful impact on the orientation of a local church. shaping its life. values and attractiveness to the surrounding community It may or may not reflect the social profile of the wider community Perhaps it is more likely to reflect the social make up of the denomination's wider constituency **local church traditions** and its **lay leadership** will also significantly affect the local church The **local clergy or priest** and their styles of leadership and personal orientations will be a key factor as will be the life-stage of the local congregation — affecting its enthusiasm. flexibility and openness to change Finally there will be **local theological orientations** that may complement or conflict with those of the wider denomination.

These factors are also summarized in figure 4 1 All these factors interact to form the church as a local organisation within the wider community

The Interaction between Church and Community

The many possible combinations and permutations of such factors will create a great many different situations for the churches in modern Australian society

It is the interaction between church and community that is all important One of the most significant aspects in this interaction is the **receptivity of the local community.** We can consider its receptivity in two ways We can look at a community's **overall religious orientation** and secondly focus more particularly on its **orientation to the churches** as social organizations The distinction is important As we shall see in later chapters. some groups in our community are less likely to attend church whilst not necessarily being less religious if that is measured in other ways Many aspects of people's attitudes to the church have nothing to do with religion but relate to the nature of the churches as organisations We can look at changes in receptivity due to shifts in attitudes affecting a whole community or due to shifts within particular sub groups within the wider society.

The other important aspect of the interaction between church and community is the churches' **openness to the community.** Put simply. this can

be described as the ease with which people can enter into the life of the church in question.

If community receptivity and church openness are two key concepts in understanding the interaction between church and community, the effectiveness of that interaction can be measured by the levels of flow from the wider community into the life of the church at various levels. A church that is a completely **closed system** — where there is no contact with the wider community and no flow through — is a church headed for decline. By contrast a church that has become an **open system** — drawing people through various aspects of its life and having a presence in the wider community — is a church with a potential to grow. Becoming and remaining an open church is a task that is harder or easier in different types of communities with different levels of receptivity.

We can gain a simple but effective measure of connectedness by using a basic analytic tool of the Church Growth Movement. Attenders in a given church can be divided into three categories. Firstly there are those who were brought up in the church. The children of the church members are examples of **biological growth.** Secondly there are those who have transferred in from another church. They constitute **growth by transfer.** Finally there are those who come into the church without a background of church attendance. In the language of the Church Growth Movement this is termed **conversion growth.**

This final category can provide a measure of the levels of connectedness of a church to its surrounding community.

Prerequisites for Connectedness

Few in the churches today would doubt the need for connectedness. Achieving it however is a vexed question and as this model has suggested, requires a clear understanding of factors affecting both the local community and the church.

Whilst it is easier to achieve in certain types of communities than in others, the results of this study will suggest three prerequisites, drawn loosely from the work of Currie, Gilbert and Horsley (1977, 59). Firstly, connectedness depends on **proximity.** A church must be available and accessible. There must be bridges between church and community across which people and communication can flow. Bridge building will involve a good understanding of the local community, its diversity, the changes taking place, the networks, the grapevines and the 'gatekeepers' who are the local opinion-formers.

Secondly, connectedness will require a **congruity** between church and community. In essence this term is being used here to suggest that local church life and actions must be culturally appropriate to the local context. This may be an extremely sensitive issue, particularly in diverse communities where church life does not itself reflect that diversity. Congruity will usually require a church to seek to develop indigenous leadership and culturally appropriate styles of church life. It will certainly require a church to allow itself to be affected by the cultural diversity of the community.

Finally, a church will need to consider its social and religious **utility** to the wider community. What are the real needs of those around them? What is it that the church is actually offering? Is there a point of intersection between what is needed and what is offered?

The model just presented has sought to build a framework for starting to look at church attendance patterns. Whilst its presentation here is of necessity brief, it does provide a grid onto which one can start to place research results and thus becomes a valuable point of reference for the rest of the study.

Part 2 of this report turns to mapping patterns of receptivity to church life in different types of communities. Part 3 will then focus on variations in levels of church attendance and religious orientation amongst different groups in the community.

In subsequent chapters we seek not so much to 'prove' the model in any sense but rather to illuminate and paint into it some detail.

PART 2

Regional Variations in Church Attendance

> ***The conclusion was clear and categorical: where one church is failing nearly all the others are, because subjected to the downward pull of the common environment. Where one church is gaining nearly all the others are, because the common environment is on the side of all . . .***
>
> ***All told then, the conclusion 'like environment; like church' is abundantly demonstrated. 'As goes the neighbourhood so goes the church', except when the church is not identified with the neighbourhood but draws upon exceptional populations or enjoys a city-wide constituency; or . . . where the church falls below or rises above its environmental conditioning by virtue of peculiar inner weaknesses or strength.***
>
> ***— An early pioneer of church research in the USA, H. Paul Douglass (Douglass and Brunner 1935, 254)***

> ***When one looks around the churches in our communities there is not a church within ten kilometres of the city centre which is experiencing any form of growth, yet there are other churches in other areas where you could put a broomstick in the pulpit — and we sometimes do — and the congregation would still grow.***
>
> ***— An unnamed (and perplexed) Australian church planner***

In the preface to this study I have noted my own experience of the diversity of church life in different types of communities in Australia. It came as a great surprise to me one day when a senior social scientist said of two Sydney suburbs: 'Of course church going is essentially the same in Turramurra and in Redfern.' For those not familiar with Sydney, Turramurra is a stable, possibly prestigious, white collar dormitory suburb on Sydney's North Shore, whilst Redfern is a cosmopolitan and often volatile inner city community with a long working class tradition. Anyone with any experience of these two communities would immediately know just how different patterns of church going in these two areas really are! The social scientist, with a keen interest in religious studies, simply should have known better.

In part 1, a broad picture of church attendance in Australia was presented and it was suggested that, in order to understand these patterns better, it was important to examine factors as they operated in the local situation. The next four chapters look in detail at regional variations in church attendance. How large are the variations between areas? How similar are the patterns for different denominations? How important is the social context in which a church is placed in determining likely church attendance rates?

Research into Regional Variations in Church Attendance

There has been a range of research into church attendance in different types of communities in both the USA and Britain. In both cases there do exist regional differences (see for instance Wuthnow and Christiano 1979, 258 and Martin

1967, 47) In his study of Britain, Gorer (1955) showed that church attendance was higher in small towns than in cities, particularly in the larger ones Some similar research has been carried out at different times in the USA (e.g. Lenski 1953).

There has also been research into regional variations within the urban environment We have already quoted one of the pioneers of church research in the USA, H Paul Douglass, who placed great stress on the local context in which a church is placed

Contemporary research has highlighted different participation rates in different types of communities (e g Zimmer and Hawley 1959 and Hadaway 1981, 1982) Hadaway comments on how greatly churches are influenced by their environments 'Churches are profoundly affected by their settings To be sure, they may grow or decline in nearly any urban location, but in some areas the possibilities for growth or decline are clearly better (or worse) than in others ' (Hadaway 1982, 372) Douglas Walruth observed a close association between changes in the neighbourhood population and the fortunes of the local church The context in which a church is placed has a great impact on likely attendance rates internal factors may then determine whether a congregation performs at the top or bottom of its context group (1979, 268).

Research in Australia

There has been a remarkable lack of research into regional fluctuations in church attendance in Australia Church planners and ministers often refer colloquially to some areas as 'Bible belts areas where church attendance is much higher than in others However, the existence of such Bible belts and the regional fluctuations in attendance patterns have never been rigorously tested or described Hunch, personal experience and intuition have usually formed the basis for assertions There have been a few exceptions Ross Langmead showed that in Melbourne, Baptist attendance rates are much higher in the Eastern suburbs than in the west (Langmead 1977) A Scripture Union report (1977) points to variations in church attendance in different parts of Sydney

Perhaps surprisingly, the 'Religion in Australia' survey found little regional variation in church attendance Mol found little difference in levels of church attendance between city and country and between Sydney and Melbourne Only slight differences were claimed between attendance rates in areas of different social status in these two cities Mol concluded that regional differences in attendance were quite small (1971, 109).

The 'Who Goes Where?' Study

The sample survey material available to this study is rather limited in the information it can provide on regional variations in church attendance In part this is due to limited sample sizes and in part to the limits of the questions asked Moreover, the surveys provide little information about the nature of the

community in which a respondent lives, forms values and interacts with others.

We therefore focus our attention in the main on church and census data. They too have their limitations but provide plenty of scope for the kinds of exploratory analysis being carried out here. In turning our attention to church and census data we shall be using Sydney and NSW as the laboratory for our investigations. Whilst this is a restriction, it is nevertheless likely that most of the trends highlighted here will also be applicable in other parts of Australia.

Church attendance rates vary greatly between individual churches in this country. In the church data collected for the 'Who Goes Where?' study Anglican attendance rates in particular churches range from one attender per thousand people in the population to around 70 attenders per thousand. Catholic mass attendance, although much higher, also varies greatly between parishes, from 75 to over 200 attenders per thousand in the parish population. Uniting church attendance ranges from 1 to 47 attenders per thousand across the parishes in NSW.

To what extent are these simply random fluctuations or the result of the institutional characteristics of individual churches — due perhaps to the quality of the preaching (or lack of quality!), the nature of the building itself, the way the church organises itself or one of many other possible factors?

No doubt all of the above play an important part in creating the range of attendance rates evident in this study. But might there not be broader patterns underlying the variations in attendance rates due not to institutional characteristics directly, but rather to the social context in which a church finds itself?

From the material available to this study it would appear that this is indeed the case. In this and subsequent chapters we seek to describe the contextual factors that are likely to affect church attendance.

The next four chapters are essentially sequential. Chapter 5 is an introductory chapter presenting a picture of some of the factors creating a diversity of social contexts in Australia. The following two chapters then look in detail at variations in church attendance in different types of communities. Chapter 6 concentrates on urban areas whilst the focus of chapter 7 is non-urban communities. The final chapter in this part draws some further conclusions from these results and suggests some implications for the churches.

5

PRELUDE: THE MANY SOCIAL CONTEXTS FOR MINISTRY

In this chapter are explored aspects of the social environment in which the churches seek to minister. Australia is one of the most urbanised countries in the world and an increasing percentage of Australians are living in large cities and regional centres.

Cities constantly grow and evolve. Two communities may share a common boundary but be worlds apart socially and culturally. The nature of a community may change over time, making the context in which a church seeks to operate today possibly quite different from the one in which it existed a decade ago. Thus, in this country, the churches are presented with a great diversity of social contexts for ministry.

I grew up in my home suburb assuming all of Australia was basically the same It was only by meeting people from quite different areas with different life experiences that I began to realise just how limited my view of the world really was

Indeed I think now that one of the major characteristics of of modern life is its diversity of people and types of communities In my work I deal with

census statistics for different suburbs and towns and I have been involved with Christian groups from a wide range of situations, both urban and non-urban I am continually staggered by the differences How would it feel for an Anglo Australian, for instance, to live in Marrickville in inner Sydney where, according to the last census, nearly 50 per cent of the population was born overseas (for many suburbs in Sydney this figure may be under 10 per cent)? Can we, who do not live in such multicultural areas or towns, even start to grasp the pressures and joys that such a situation might bring? Ken Rolph commented that you know you're living in multicultural Australia when your Anglo-Australian children want to know why they can't have rice and noodles for lunch like the other kids and then backchat you in Spanish, Korean or Arabic(1985, 64)! What would it be like to be involved in ministry in such an area?

Or consider some of our inner urban communities so characterised by rapid population mobility What about the North Sydney Crows Nest region where the last census indicated that over half the population had moved into the area during the last five years (in stable residential communities the figure can be around 25 per cent) Transient populations in cities and service towns can occur for many reasons closeness to universities, psychiatric hospitals or other welfare services, proximity to major business districts and so on The mere provision of medium and high density housing stock which can be used by groups of people for a short time at a particular phase in their lives — for instance whilst saving to buy a house — will have a major impact on the mobility of the local population What are the pressures and joys of such a floating, flowing population? How does it affect life experiences? What does it do to Christian ministry there? I live in such a suburb In a church in my area the congregation has turned over completely nearly three times in the eight years that I have known it.

Within our society, areas differ greatly in terms of the educational and occupational backgrounds of the members of the community In some parts of Sydney, for instance in many of our northern and some southern suburbs, up to 30 per cent of people have professional occupations In others particularly in some western south western and inner city communities, that figure can be as low as 5 per cent. In many non urban communities the figure can be still lower Areas of lower socio economic status also experience unemployment rates far greater than other parts of the our society. In such areas unemployment rates can be well over 15 per cent It is often very difficult for people in other areas with much lower rates to even start to appreciate the impact of unemployment when its major impact is geographically distant from them

Likewise, as regards education: Sometimes up to 17 per cent of a community on the North Shore of Sydney have tertiary degrees compared with under 2 per cent in some other regions In some parts of Sydney 70 to 90 per cent of school students complete secondary education while in others, and in some country areas, the rate can be less than 15 per cent (*Sydney Morning Herald* 20/2/87).

How different are attitudes and expectations in different areas? Where I was brought up it was the norm to go on to university after high school, the only question was which course to take. I have been involved in an area where, of all the teenagers I knew, only a handful bothered completing the full six years of high school. For them real education happened in quite a different arena. It was here that I too discovered how much I had to learn about life from these 'alternate' sources of education.

There are many areas in our cities and towns where the age profile of the residents is maintained in balance. But in some places this is just not so. Some of our smaller rural communities have very few young adults due to a lack of local educational and occupational possibilities. How does it affect a locality to lose its youthful enthusiasm to regional centres or the major cities? In some of the new housing estates in our cities, populations can tend to be quite homogeneous in age. In some areas of Sydney for instance, 45 per cent of the population are under twenty (compared to the Sydney average of around 30 per cent) whilst only 1.5 per cent are over fifty (Sydney average is about 7 per cent). Those of us who live in older areas can have very little idea of the joys and pressures of life in the growth areas of our major cities, where living in the locality for a few years can make you an 'old-timer'.

How does it affect community life, say, for a child growing up almost never seeing senior citizens or wrinkles? Or for a community with a great many hopes and dreams but very short on identity, traditions and networks? And how does this affect ministry? What is the role of the church in these brand new social contexts?

Each of the differing types of communities in our society generates its own specific culture, values and peer group norms. Each community generates a specific context in which the churches as local organisations seek to operate.

How Local Is Church-Going?

Whilst there is a range of different types of churches in a modern industrialised society one can draw a distinction between those whose congregations and area of concern are widely dispersed and those whose focus is more local (e.g. Shippey 1960). In the former category we can include central city and regional churches, ethnic and other special purpose congregations. There has been growth in these types of churches in our cities in recent years both through the development of some large regional churches (often charismatic or Pentecostal) and the spread of ethnic congregations.

Most congregations however are locally based, coming from and seeking to serve a local neighbourhood. This is the case for most non-urban churches and, in urban areas, it is more true for some mainline Protestant churches than for the Catholic churches. Research indicates that for the Uniting church in South Australia by far the majority of church goers travel less than two kilometres to church (Threapleton 1980). From data on a sample of urban

churches in Sydney this study found that 81 per cent of Anglican attenders and 84 per cent of Uniting attenders lived within two kilometres of their churches Attenders at Catholic mass are more dispersed, there tend to be more regional mass centres according to data from a 1981 census of Catholic attenders in western Sydney.

Because most churches are so local in orientation *it becomes essential for them to understand in detail the local context in which they find themselves This is particularly true in eras and areas experiencing rapid social change*

URBANISATION: A FACT OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE

We often hear the expression 'We live in a global village Much as it might express the increased communication and inter-relatedness of nations, the expression is fundamentally inaccurate. In fact we do not live in a global *village*, we live in a global *city* On a world wide scale, urbanisation is a major phenomenon of twentieth-century life. Fuelled initially by the industrial revolution and maintained and accelerated by continuing revolutions in transport and technology, urbanisation has continued at an amazing rate. UNESCO provides some dramatic figures between 1900 and 1975 the number of cities with over a million inhabitants has increased tenfold: cities over five million have multiplied by twenty Whilst in 1900 only 14 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas, today that figure is around 43 per cent and by 2000 half the world's population will live in urban areas (1985, 27).

Whilst some of the most dramatic impact of these changes are in developing nations, urbanisation is also a fact of life in western countries Australia is currently one of the most urbanised countries in the world. Depending on one's definition of urban about 85 per cent of our population live in urban areas, and this figure has been steadily increasing. To take Sydney as an example in 1850 about 27 per cent of the population of NSW lived in Sydney By 1900 the figure was 35 per cent and in 1970 it had risen to 60 per cent (Neutze 1977 9) Such a pattern of increase is reflected in the other states and has continued to the present day Between 1960 and 1980 the percentage of the Australian population living in cities of over 100,000 people has increased from 60 per cent to 65 per cent while those in towns of 1 000 people or less has dropped from 18 per cent to 13 per cent.

Urbanisation is a process affecting all facets of society, creating ever higher levels of social organisation inter connectedness, dependence and complexity Its effect extends into even the smallest of non urban communities

We live in a rapidly changing society. Industrial and technological revolutions have fundamentally altered the social fabric in which we live The stable *village community* with its small, static and culturally monochrome population has largely disappeared, if it ever did exist at all In its place has developed the *urban web* with its huge and continually shifting population, high mobility and cultural diversity Community is often on the basis of shared in

terest rather than geographical location, there is a high degree of social segregation yet an inter dependence of economy and social functions controlled by powerful interests and elites. In this great aggregation of people, some find themselves with no role in the society and feel quite powerless to control their destinies. The terms *village community* and *urban web* are obviously highly simplistic caricatures, yet they help us to see the processes of change that we are all caught up in.

This is not intended to be a study of modern Australian society. There are many other factors creating social change that are not dealt with here. Changing levels of unemployment, for instance, are affecting the lives and identities of many Australians. There are also many changes occurring in the nature of family life. The media exerts powerful pressures on our lives. Yet it is important to understand some of the fabric of modern life if we are to locate church attendance patterns within that fabric. In the following section a brief sketch is made of some of the patterns and changes taking place in our larger population centres.

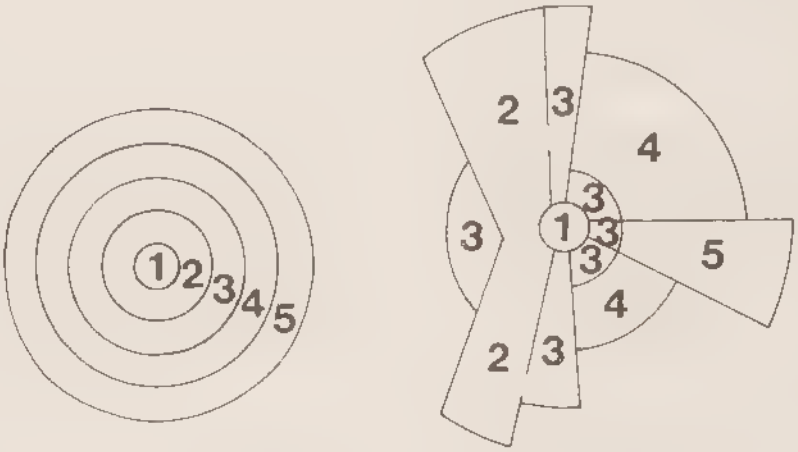
CITIES: PATTERNS AND CHANGE

One of the characteristics of cities is that they continually develop and change. The social make-up of any one area will change with time. The spatial structure of a city will reflect the variety of roles it seeks to perform. Within a central business district competition for space produces office towers of huge proportions. Medium to high density housing develops along the transport routes. And so on.

Many social researchers have focussed attention on the patterns of city development. One of the earlier models of urban form sees the city as being made up of concentric zones (see figure 5.1). The *Burgess concentric ring model* (Park and Burgess 1925) views the spatial structure of cities as a consequence of population growth and expansion of the city from the centre. As cities grow these rings move outwards as suburbs go through the various phases of their development. A rural community is overtaken by new urban development. Such a new community is usually designed for a particular social strata and gradually develops into a stable dormitory suburb. Over time, it starts to age. The effects of urban redevelopment and industrialisation may change the nature of the area often lowering its social status. New groups start to move into the community and it enters a transitional phase. The passing of the years will see its identity change as these new groups settle in, or again move on. The cycle can begin again. In large cities that contain several regional business and commercial districts such processes may be occurring around each central node.

For some communities in Australia, this process began nearly two hundred years ago. For others it has started today. For some it is a process that regularly repeats itself, for instance communities experiencing a succession of different ethnic groupings. For others the process may be quite slow or non-

Figure 5.1 Traditional Models of Urban Structure



CONCENTRIC ZONE THEORY *SECTOR THEORY*

Zones within a city (according to Burgess)

1 ***Central business district***: almost exclusively commercial with wholesaling, light industry and retail functions dominant
2 ***Zone of transition***: undergoing, or about to undergo, significant changes. It exhibits a very mixed pattern of land use and its low rental values and lack of any strict social control make it a centre for the poor, new immigrants and the socially disorganised. It is an area of deteriorating housing mixed with factories and rooming houses
3 ***Zone of working men's homes***: an area of sound, if inexpensive, houses, the zone of second generation settlement by the more highly assimilated, and hence affluent, immigrants
4 ***Residential zone***: that of 'better residences'. It continues the pattern of rising status with decreasing centrality, being essentially a middle class area of single-family homes
5 ***Zone of commuters***: an affluent and exclusive suburban area comprised of the peripheral areas of the city or separate smaller towns

existent, as in some high status dormitory suburbs well removed from the central city area.

These changes can significantly affect the life and viability of local institutions such as the churches.

These patterns can be seen in Australian cities and regional centres although, as many observers have noted, patterns are not necessarily concentric. Another model, *Hoyt's Sectoral Model* (1939), whilst recognising the existence of zones within cities, stresses the sectoral nature of cities. High status areas grow in the best locations, one side or other of (and reasonably

close to) the Central Business District. As one moves away from this sector, one moves into lower status regions. In Australian cities we see the existence of sectors. The eastern suburbs of Melbourne for instance tend to be higher status than those in the west whilst the eastern suburbs and North Shore of Sydney are high status areas compared to the topographically less interesting western sector.

These theories have been of central importance in the development of an understanding of patterns and change in urban society. Both these models were developed before the Second World War. Whilst they are still of value in understanding Australian cities, more recent developments in urban form require some modification of these approaches. Significant changes to these patterns have taken place.

The Increasing Development of Regional Centres

Modern cities have tended not to be simply focussed around one central business district. Changing business and commercial philosophies have seen the development in Australian cities of regional business districts. This has meant that some small, local communities and retail districts have rapidly exploded from their local role into busy regional centres, bringing important consequences for the local organisations operating there, including the churches.

The Overflowing City

The shape of our cities is the result of complex social processes in both the private sector and in government planning. The decline in the quality of housing stock in the inner areas and the need for inexpensive housing in the post war period created intense pressures on governments. The result was the development of a conscious policy for large scale housing areas beyond the edges of our cities. Plans included higher status residential suburbs as well as lower status 'overflow' estates. Many of those who would historically have lived in the inner metropolitan areas were shifted to the edge of the city. This policy has been assisted by the increasing mobility of our society which has enabled people to live at a greater distance from their workplace.

The Changing Inner Heart

The last thirty years have seen many urban redevelopment or renewal projects in the inner areas of Australian cities. Some have achieved important improvements in quality of life for residents. Others, particularly block clearance and high-rise redevelopment, have often served to break up traditional communities and familiar landmarks whilst accommodation has become increasingly hard to find and more expensive.

The face of parts of our older urban areas has been in the process of changing. This has occurred partly through the increasing relocation of the urban working class into outer housing estates, and partly due to the post war influx of immigrants who, with limited resources, came to live in the poorer housing of the inner city. Also, and perhaps of critical importance, many inner areas have become attractive to people from more affluent sectors of the community. Some of the slum stigma of these areas was removed by the return of these articulate middle-class professionals to the city. In this 'gentrification' process, houses have been bought up that formerly were offered at low rental or subdivided as rooming houses. They are now used as family homes for professional people. Such areas come to be marked by restored terraces, restaurants, cinemas and galleries. The old 'slums' are seen as possessing 'historical interest' or 'architectural charm'. Such social processes have acted in the interests of those with resources and power in society — poorer people and particularly those renting their homes have been faced with increasing housing problems. They have often been forced to the urban fringes by the introduction and eventual takeover by young, affluent, mobile professionals of areas previously lived in for generations by working class people.

Segregation and the Housing Market

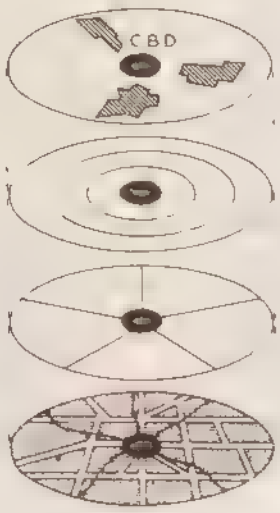
Segregation is a fact of life in modern cities. By and large, the housing market allows people to live where they can afford. It thus tends to separate people out according to socio economic status, stage in the lifecycle and race. This process can be seen diagrammatically in figure 5.2. It is derived from the work of R. A. Murdie, who suggests that segregation due to socio-economic status tends to be sectoral in nature. On the other hand lifecycle and family status differentiation tends to occur concentrically: Home units and housing suitable for single adults and couples without children are more concentrated in inner areas whereas cheap housing for families is more readily available further out (1969, 7).

Ethnic groups tend to congregate in certain regions, creating some highly multicultural regions within a city. Different ethnic groups may congregate in different areas and some are more likely to congregate together than others. In Sydney the Arian, Greek and Lebanese communities all exhibit high levels of cohesion (Horvath and Tait 1984, viii).

Once so segregated, communities develop their own lives and norms, conditioned by the wider social processes. Some communities struggle to survive on the resources available to them locally, others struggle to discover how to make use of the surfeit of resources at their disposal. People's location in the social order and in the city will condition their life experiences, their perception of possibilities and their attitudes in a whole range of ways.

Thus the processes of the housing market generate a complex range of social contexts within which the churches seek to operate. Each context will possess its own unique aspects.

Figure 5.2 Segregation in the Urban Web — A Model of the Residential Structure of the City.



Major Factors in the Shaping of Cities

Ethnic Concentration: some ethnic groups congregate together forming highly multicultural regions in a city

Stage in Lifecycle: people have different needs at different stages in life

Socio Economic Status: people can only live where they can afford. Some sectors are of higher status than others

Physical Characteristics: the topography of a city will affect the social patterns that emerge

Source: Mariet (1982)

A SIMPLE TYPOLOGY OF CONTEXTS FOR MINISTRY

In the previous section we focused on larger cities. However it should be evident that such processes also operate to varying degrees in larger regional centres and towns in non-urban Australia.

Given the preceding analysis it should be possible to develop a grid of community types in Australian society. Such a grid can help in both the visualisation of the social structure of modern society and in analysis of the church's penetration of different types of communities. For a grid to be useful it must be kept fairly simple. The following typology was developed from the available social profile data. It describes four non-urban and seven urban community types which are presented in figures 5.3 and 5.4 respectively.

The non-urban categories are based on the population of the town or centre. The urban categories were based on the percentage of professionals in the community (a measure of socio-economic status), areas of population growth, the percentage in the area renting privately (a mobility indicator) and the percentage born overseas.

Figure 5.3 Different Types of Communities: Non-Urban Australia

SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES

These are mainly farming communities where the largest town has a population of less than 5,000 people. They often lack some of the amenities of larger towns and centres. Jobs and education and specialised medical advice are often only to be found in cities and regional centres. As a consequence families face the inevitable splitting up at the end of a child's schooling.

On the other hand, the strengths of community networks can provide a sense of belonging and identity. At its best a close-knit community can be very supportive in contrast to the anonymity of life in larger communities. As small as these communities may be, they are far from homogeneous, containing people from different social backgrounds and with oftentimes quite different interests. Sometimes dependent on just a few types of agriculture, small rural communities are economically very vulnerable to the rise and fall of their products on international markets as well as to the effects of droughts and floods. Population decline is sometimes an issue in these areas.

SERVICE TOWNS

These are regions based around towns of between 5,000 and 10,000 people. Such towns provide facilities for the surrounding district — larger shops, medical and educational services and some venues for entertainment. Here too there are fewer young adults as many must leave to find educational and employment opportunities.

LARGE REGIONAL CENTRES

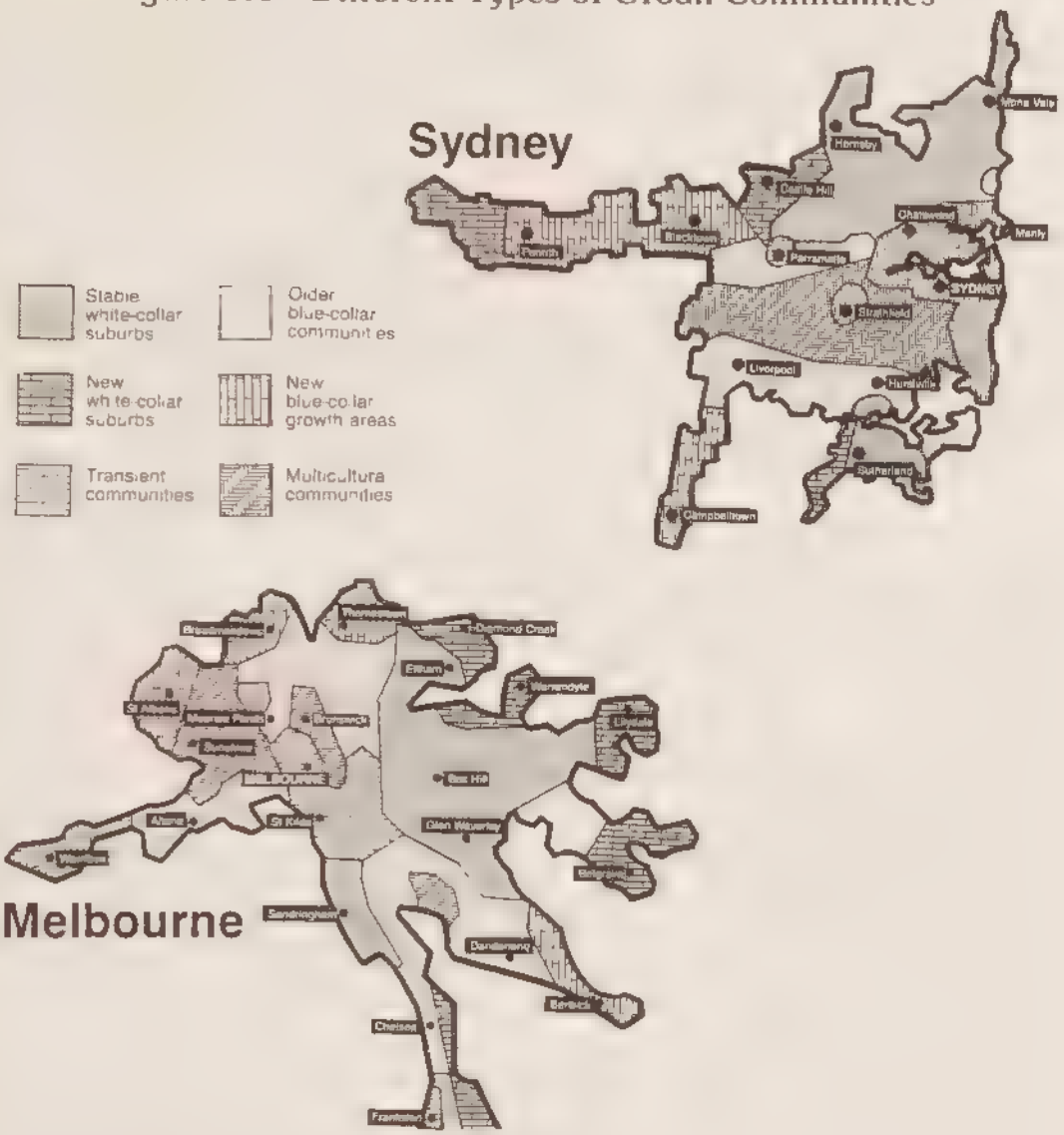
Life in large regional centres is quite different again. These centres have populations of over 10,000 people ranging up towards 40,000 people. Given their regional roles, they have a range of commercial, economic, industrial and social functions. The social fabric of such centres is more complex with a great diversity in their populations. There are the long term residents and the more recent arrivals, because of the service functions of such regional centres there tend to be more people in professional occupations or with tertiary education. The economies of such centres can be dependent on single industries, companies or services and thus are vulnerable to fluctuations in rural or industrial markets. Particularly in the case of the seaboard centres they are often substantially affected by the tourist industry.

OUTBACK AREAS

These are areas of very sparse population. Distance becomes a very real factor in the lives of those who seek to earn a living there. The outback has been changing in many ways as people try to counter the effects of distance. Radio, television and communications on one hand and light aircraft on the other have brought the rest of Australia much closer.

In the following chapters we shall examine church attendance patterns in different types of communities using church and census data. It is important when looking at these patterns of attendance, to keep in mind the diversity of social contexts for ministry described in this chapter. As we shall see, there are large variations in church penetration of different types of areas and neighbourhoods.

Figure 5.4 Different Types of Urban Communities



CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICTS

These are the main retail and commercial hubs of the city. Relatively few live in these centres but many thousands spend substantial proportions of their lives working and shopping there.

Churches in the central business districts have tended to be regional, drawing their clientele from across the city or focused on mid-week ministry to workers and shoppers.

STABLE WHITE-COLLAR SUBURBS

These are parts of the large urban centres that are essentially older dormitory suburbs. They are areas with higher levels of people in the community with tertiary education, in professional occupations or with high incomes. They are typified by the image of 'suburban middle Australia'.

Compared to other types of areas, these suburbs have lower percentages of 20–30 year olds in the community (often due to high housing costs), fewer people who have been divorced or separated, and are largely Anglo-Australian.

NEW WHITE-COLLAR COMMUNITIES

Such communities, often on the outskirts of the cities, are where new fairly well-off families are settling. Often topographically interesting settings, they also tend to have higher percentages of people in white-collar occupations. Developments in these areas are usually by private developer

Like the older white-collar communities, these suburbs have higher percentages of families with children and fewer people who are divorced or separated than many other areas. They also have very few recently arrived migrants

TRANSIENT COMMUNITIES.

These are areas characterised by high population turnover. They tend to be inner urban, with many flats and home units. Often housing highly mobile and/or career-based young professionals they possess a diversity of lifestyles and values not associated with the more stable suburban Australia. The age profiles of these communities often differ from other areas: transient communities contain fewer children and households with dependents, more 20–30 year olds and have higher levels of separated and divorced.

In large part the diversity of lifestyles reflects a more cosmopolitan orientation and an outflow of the cultural alternatives that developed amongst those growing up during the sixties and seventies. In some cases there is also some ethnic diversity and usually a great many people living alone. In transient communities tensions often arise between long term residents and the new arrivals. The difference, in interests and needs, between the young unmarried and the old retired can be especially great. Those who are highly mobile often have little attachment to the local area; their "communities" tend to be more "interest based" than geographical.

OLDER BLUE COLLAR COMMUNITIES

As with the stable white collar suburbs these are parts of the large urban centres that are essentially older dormitory suburbs. They are more predominantly blue-collar communities with fewer people with tertiary education or in professional occupations. The communities tend to be more diverse culturally than the stable white-collar suburbs. Many of these areas would appear to be on the edge of large social change. Some of these communities have had large Housing Commission involvement in post war development.

NEW BLUE COLLAR GROWTH AREAS

These are largely communities on the edges of the major cities changed by the creation in recent years of large 'overflow' housing estates. They are characterised by large population growth as many new families move in. The average age of such communities is often disproportionately young. Many in the community are first home buyers and many of the estates have been developed by the Housing Commission. In many cases these are areas in transition from a non-urban to an urban identity.

New estates provide opportunities for many and the chance for a lot of starting afresh. There are however many challenges: isolation from old friends and support networks and the distance from work opportunities and entertainment. Shopping facilities and public transport are sometimes non-existent. Unemployment in these regions can be a major problem, unemployment rates can be up to three times those in some of the stable white-collar communities.

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

These suburbs are those with very high percentages of the population born overseas. Whilst the ethnic groupings may vary from area to area, multicultural communities share unique problems and possibilities that arise from the interaction of differing ways of life, customs, beliefs and values. Such areas tend to have a reasonably high population turnover and are predominantly blue-collar in character.

6

CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN URBAN AREAS

In urban areas, certain types of communities are likely to sustain large churches whilst in others churches of all denominations are likely to be struggling. Mainline Protestant churches all tend to be stronger in stable dormitory suburbs which are of higher socio-economic status and have few people born overseas. Attendance rates are much lower in more diverse, multicultural or blue-collar communities. Catholic mass attendance rates are more widely spread although nominal Catholics are less likely to be regular attenders in areas of lower socio-economic status or where there are high percentages of 20–29 year olds.

In this chapter we examine the patterns of church attendance in different types of urban communities. In so doing we seek to understand in which types of communities a denomination is well represented as well as those in which it struggles. We further wish to compare the patterns for the different denominations. Are all the mainline churches strong in the same types of areas or do they tend to complement each other, one being strong in an area in which another is weak?

Regional Variations in Church Attendance in Urban Sydney

As a preliminary step, regional variations in attendance rates within urban Sydney were analyzed Information was collected on attendance in individual Anglican, Catholic, Churches of Christ and Uniting churches and in Salvation Army citadels These data were augmented by information on Baptist membership and Presbyterian communicants Whilst these are all indicators of relative church strength, it is important to remember that they are different measures The aim of this section is to compare the patterns of distribution; clearly comparison of the relative numerical strengths of denominations is not possible.

It was also thought worthwhile to examine the distribution of supporters of two large Christian movements Scripture Union is a large non-denominational evangelical outreach organisation whose membership can give a clue to the distribution of evangelical Christians in Sydney Vision Ministries is also non denominational, it is a large charismatic ministry drawing supporters from both Pentecostal and mainline churches The distribution of supporters can give an indication of the distribution of Charismatic Christians in Sydney

The Sydney Metropolitan area was divided into twenty one regions and average attendance rates calculated for each region The results are presented in appendix 1. It is clear from these results that *there are indeed large variations in attendance levels in different regions of Sydney For the non Catholic denominations, the attendance rate in high attendance regions is many times that of the low attendance regions* To use as an example the Anglican pattern, whilst over twenty people per thousand in the population attend an Anglican church on the upper and lower North Shore, Ryde-Eastwood, North West suburbs and Blue Mountains, the attendance rates in Liverpool Fairfield, Bankstown, Blacktown Penrith and Randwick Botany are under six attenders per thousand in the population

There are also variations in Catholic attendance between regions although perhaps not to the same degree as for other denominations.

Further analysis of the data was carried out to examine the similarity of denominational patterns Again the results are provided in appendix 1 *There appears to be a great deal of similarity between the patterns for Anglican and Uniting churches and, indeed, amongst all the Protestant churches with the exception of the Salvation Army* Areas in which one of them is strong are areas where all of them are likely to be doing reasonably well The supporters of Scripture Union tend to be strongly concentrated in areas with high Anglican church attendance and, given their similar theological orientations, this is not surprising.

Beyond these churches and groups the patterns become more diverse. The Salvation Army distribution is rather different, with its strength in the inner western and southern suburbs Catholic mass attendance is different again with the highest levels of mass attendance in the inner metropolitan area, Strathfield, Ryde/Eastwood, the Hills and Parramatta.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMUNITIES

It is clear from the previous section that there are large variations in church attendance between different regions. To gain a clearer picture of the effect of the local social context on church attendance we can use the social profile data available to us on Anglican, Catholic and Uniting church parishes. We have obtained data on the social profile of each of their parishes in Sydney, Wollongong (Anglican and Uniting only), Newcastle and Canberra (Uniting only). Most of the information is census data. For these denominations we thus have a data base on each parish with information both on church attendance and the nature of the community in which the church is placed. The full list of social profile data is given in appendix 1.

Put simply, the task in this section is to discover, for each denomination, *which kind of communities tend to be high church going communities and which do not*. Closer analysis of the Anglican and Uniting patterns can also be a guide to those for the other Protestant churches, apart from the Salvation Army.

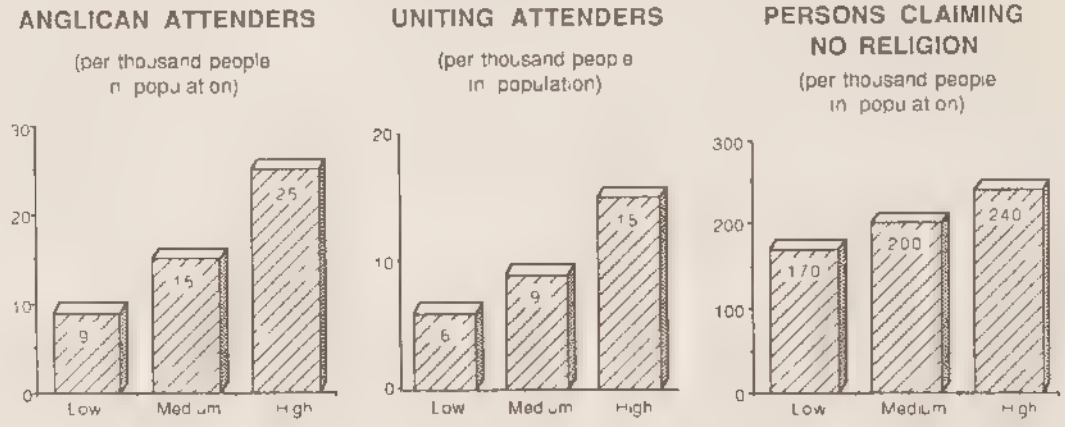
Two separate measures of levels of attendance have been developed for this analysis. The first, a *general attendance rate* was calculated as the number of attenders per thousand people living in the parish area. In terms of the model presented in part 1 this rate can be seen as a measure of the overall impact of a church in a given community. The second, *the attendance rate of nominal adherents* was given by the number of attenders per thousand nominal adherents in the community. This measure can be seen as an indication of the levels of church attendance of those already affiliated to the denomination. These two measures are complementary in their use, but distinct in their meaning.

There are large variations in attendance rates for variations in many of the social predictors. The socio economic predictors have the largest impact, but age, ethnicity, housing tenure and family structure predictors are also seen to have a significant effect on the likely attendance rates in a given area. Specific results are shown in figures in the text. Other results are presented in table 6.7.

Socio-Economic Indicators

The various socio-economic indicators show strong correlations with church attendance rates for the Anglican and Uniting churches. Areas with high percentages of people with university degrees, working in professional or technical occupations, with incomes over $26 000 per year or areas with high average income are areas with high church attendance rates. Conversely there tend to be low attendance rates in areas with high percentages of people with no qualifications, working as labourers or process workers or with high percentages of the workforce unemployed. The higher the socio economic status of a community, the higher its attendance rate is likely to be. The results

Figure 6.1 Variations in Levels of Church Attendance in Communities of Different Socio-Economic Status



Sources: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1 for details)

for communities with different percentages of people in professional occupations are shown diagrammatically in figure 6.1.

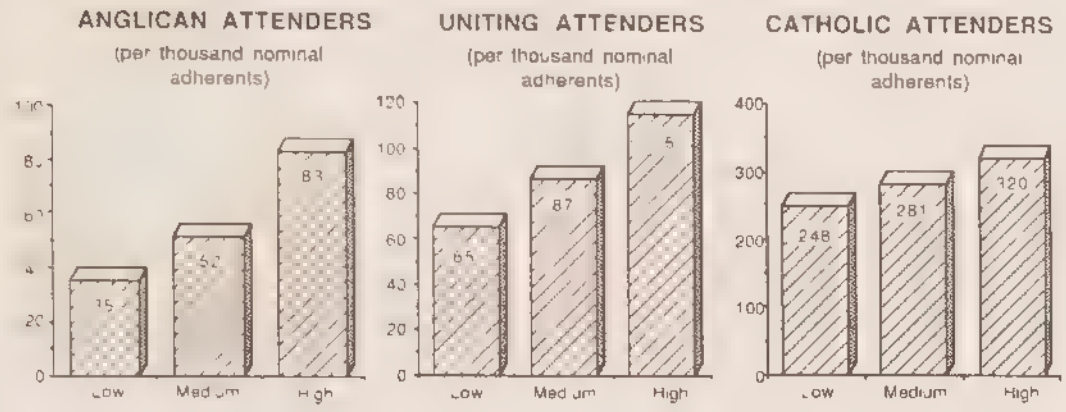
An additional point to note is that church-going is strongest in areas where fewer women are in full time employment, an important result given the changing participation rate of women in the workforce generally.

At first sight the Catholic church does not mirror these patterns. Mass attendance rates do not appear to significantly differ between regions of different socio-economic status. According to the census there are, however, more nominal Catholics in lower status areas on which to draw than in areas of higher status. When we examine the attendance rates of nominal adherents, Catholic patterns appear similar to those of the Anglican and Uniting churches: *nominal Catholics in higher status areas are much more likely to be regular mass attenders than their counterparts in areas of lower status.* This can be seen in figure 6.2.

It is often argued by Protestant church planners and clergy that attendance at church is poorer in areas of lower socio-economic status because there are many fewer nominal adherents in these areas: church attendance is low because 'they are all Catholics there!'

Such claims have very little substance. The lower attendance rates in such communities are not purely due to a lack of nominal adherents in such areas but rather are in large part a result of the decision of nominal adherents in such regions not to attend church. In general terms we can suggest from figure 6.2 that nominal adherents are twice as likely to attend Anglican and Uniting churches in areas of higher socio-economic status than in lower status areas.

Figure 6.2 Variations in the Attendance of Nominal Adherents — The Socio-Economic Status of a Community



Source: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1 for details)

These results invite deeper reflection on the values, norms and local cultures of different regions and of the interaction between church and society in various types of communities.

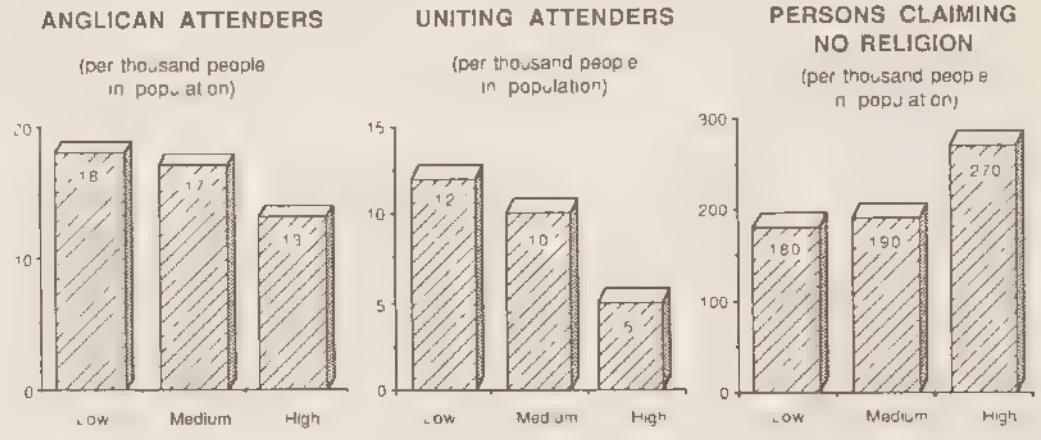
By contrast, people resident in high status areas are much more likely to claim no religious affiliation at the census than those in lower status areas. This is shown for a range of variables in figure 6.1 and table 6.7. We have then a most curious pattern in which people in higher status areas are both more likely to be regular church attenders and to disclaim religious affiliation altogether.

Housing Tenure Indicators

Church attendance tends to be higher in areas with higher percentages of people owning their own homes for both Anglican and Catholic churches. Moreover, as can be seen in figure 6.3, Anglican and Uniting church attendance rates are much lower in areas with high percentages of people renting privately. Such parishes would tend to be characterised by high population mobility. It would appear that *church attendance tends to be stronger in stable home owning suburbs and weaker in more mobile communities containing high percentages of people renting their homes.*

Anglican church attendance rates are lower in areas with high percentages of housing authority residents, a result further underlining the socio-economic results presented earlier.

Figure 6.3 Housing Tenure and Levels of Church Attendance



Sources: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1 for details)

People are more likely to claim no religious affiliation at the census in areas where there are higher percentages of people renting their houses, or where there is high population turnover. As we shall see in later chapters, this is likely to be in part a reflection of the age profile of those who are renting their housing.

Ethnicity

Anglican and Uniting church attendance rates are highest in parishes with low percentages of people born overseas. As is seen in figure 6.4, for both churches the attendance rates in the most ethnically diverse communities are less than half the attendance rates in the least ethnically diverse areas.

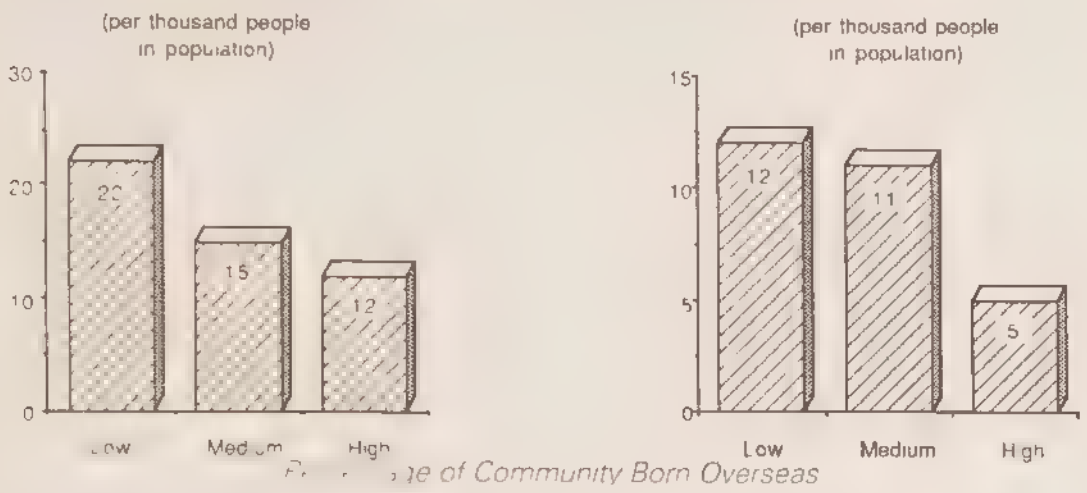
An analysis of the attendance rates of nominal adherents in different types of areas does NOT reveal a similar pattern. There is no significant relationship between the ethnicity of an area and the attendance rates of nominal adherents resident there. We can conclude that the lower attendance rates at churches in highly multicultural communities reflects a lack of nominal adherents living in such areas.

Catholic mass attendance exhibits little fluctuation with the overall ethnicity of an area.

Family Structure and Age Predictors

Areas with low percentages of people who are separated tend to have stronger attendance rates than other areas for all the denominations (see figure 6.5). Similarly, areas with very few people who are divorced tend to have higher

Figure 6.4 The Ethnicity of a Community and Levels of Church Attendance

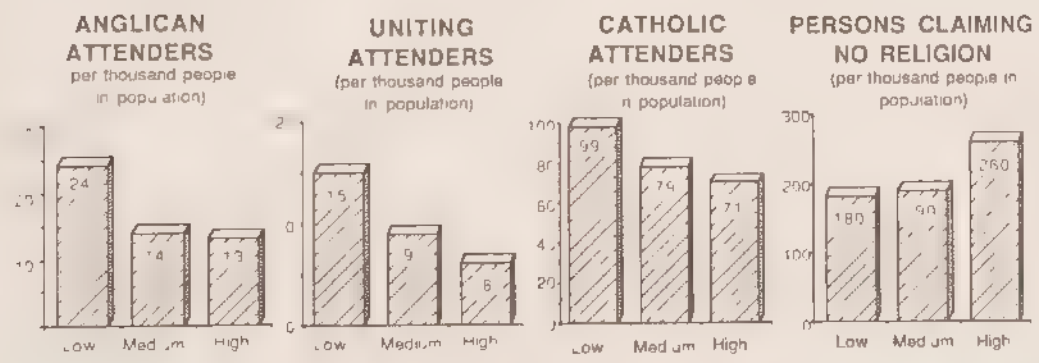


Source: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1 for details)

church attendance rates than other areas. Parishes with large numbers of people living alone tend to have low Uniting church attendance rates as do those with low percentages of couples with children. Also, areas with large numbers of single parent families tend to have significantly lower attendance rates for the Catholic and Anglican churches.

As can be seen in figure 6.5, people are much more likely to claim no religious affiliation at the census in areas with high percentages of people who

Figure 6.5 Percentage of Community Who Are Separated — Church Attendance Variations



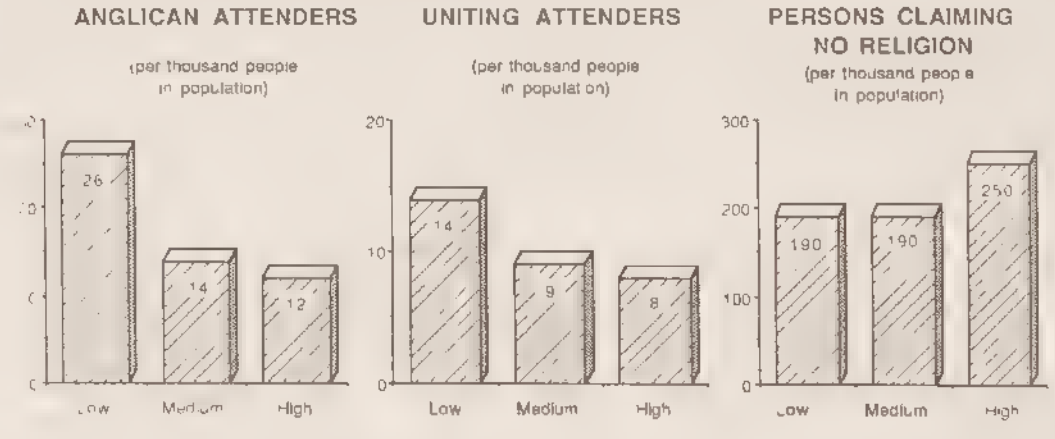
Sources: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1 for details)

are separated or divorced. This is also true of areas where many people live alone or where there are few couples with children.

The age profiles of parishes provide important insights into attendance patterns. *For all denominations attendance is higher in areas with few twenty to twenty-nine year olds.* For Anglican and Uniting churches, attendance rates in parishes with the largest percentages of twenty to thirty year olds are approximately half those in parishes with the fewest twenty to thirty year olds. People in areas with high percentages of twenty to twenty nine year olds are more likely to claim no religious affiliation. Anglican attendance is higher in areas with high percentages of people aged over seventy. The older the average age of a community, the higher the expected Anglican attendance rate.

Whilst there are variations between denominations, the overall pattern suggests that attendance is higher in stable dormitory suburbs with traditional family structures and lowest where there are large numbers of young adults.

Figure 6.6 Levels of Church Attendance and the Age Profile of a Community



Sources: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1 for details)

Does City Have Any Impact on Attendance Rates?

In the analysis of Uniting Church attendance patterns we have combined parish data from four cities — Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and the ACT. There are considerable differences in the overall attendance rates in each city.

Are these differences simply the result of differing social composition or does the city in which a parish is located have an additional impact on church

attendance patterns? Would parishes located in different cities but identical on all the census predictors, expect different attendance rates?

To answer this question we can use a statistical technique called multiple regression analysis, including the city in which each parish is located in a multiple regression model with all the social predictors. From the results of the regression the answer to this question is basically no. Knowledge of the city in

Table 6.7 Other Social Profile Predictors and Church Attendance

A Overall Levels of Church Attendance Per Thousand in Population

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Uniting*	*Catholic*	*People Claiming No Religion*
Percentage of Community with University Degree or Equivalent				
— Low				17
— Medium		1	N.S.	20
— High				2[illegible]
Percentage with No Qualifications				
— Low		1[illegible]		24
— Medium		1	N.S.	20
— High				17
Percentage of High Income Earners in Community				
— Low				17
— Medium	1		N.S.	
— High				23
Percentage of Labourers/ Process Workers				
— Low		14		24
— Medium	1[illegible]		N.S.	
— High	1			1[illegible]
Level of Unemployment in Community				
— Low		1		1[illegible]
— Medium	[illegible]4	1	N.S.	
— High				
Percentage of Females in Full-Time Employment				
— Low		1[illegible]		
— Medium	[illegible]4		N.S.	1
— High	1			21

Table 6.7 — *Continued*

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Uniting*	*Catholic*	*People Claiming No Religion*
Percentage Owning Their Own Residence				
— Low	12		78	240
— Medium	17	N S	76	200
High	19		101	170
Percentage Renting from Housing Authority				
— Low	20			
— Medium	17	N S	N S	N.S
— High	11			
Percentage of Community Resident Five Years or More				
— Low				250
Medium	N S	N S.	N S	200
High				170
Percentage Who Are Divorced				
Low		15	99	180
Medium	N S	9	79	180
High		7	70	270
Percentage of Single Parent Families in Area				
– Low	20		104	
Medium	16	N S	80	N S
High	13		66	
Percentage of Nominal Adherents in Community				
— Low	11	4	68	
— Medium	17	.9	82	N S
— High	20	16	96	

which a parish is placed contributes little extra to our ability to predict attendance rates. *The variations between attendance rates in the different cities appear to be largely the result of the different social composition of each.*

Table 6.7 Other Social Profile Predictors and Church Attendance

B Attendance Rates of Nominal Adherents Per Thousand in Population

	Anglican	*Uniting*	*Catholic*
Percentage with No Qualifications			
— Low	81	126	354
Medium	54	89	311
High	33	71	255
Percentage of High Income Earners			
— Low	37	69	245
— Medium	[illegible]	87	283
— High	[illegible]	114	421
Percentage Owning Their Residence			
Low	[illegible]		
— Medium	59	N S	N S
— High	[illegible]		
Percentage Renting from a Housing Authority			
— Low	[illegible]		309
— Medium	[illegible]	N S	291
High	[illegible]		256
Percentage of Single Parent Families			
— Low	[illegible]		350
— Medium	[illegible]	N S	279
— High	44		235
Percentage of Population Aged between 20 and 29 Years			
— Low	77		427
— Medium	49	N S	279
— High	47		251
Average Age of Community			
Low	[illegible]		272
— Medium	[illegible]	N S	266
— High	[illegible]		344

Note N S means not statistically significant at a 5% level

Just How Much Does Social Context Affect Church Attendance?

One aspect of a multiple regression analysis is that it can give an idea of the overall effect of all the social profile data We can conclude that a knowledge of the social profile data can enable us to predict around 50 per cent of the variations in attendance patterns in urban areas for the Anglican and Uniting churches External factors (or at least those tested for here) can account for half the variation in attendance. Of course this does not establish a causal link, but it certainly suggests that the social context of ministry is an important aspect of understanding likely church attendance patterns.

A knowledge of the social profile data can explain less of the variation in Catholic mass attendance rates From his experience conducting a census of Catholic mass attenders in western Sydney in 1981, John Doran suggests that many people attend mass in places very distant from where they live In part this is due to particular factors within the lives of the local churches — for example, the personality of the priest or the ethnic characteristics of a parish — and in part due to convenience People may attend a mass on the way to or from their weekend activities (personal communications).

The actual predictive models developed for the Anglican and Uniting churches are given in appendix 1 They tend to confirm the importance of factors such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, age and family structure. Ethnicity does not emerge as a factor in the case of predictive models of the attendance rates of nominal adherents

These predictive models may be of some use to local churches Using census data on their local parish, they could arrive at an estimate of likely attendance rates for a church of their denomination in their particular social context This would provide them with a yardstick for evaluation of their effectiveness.

Some Further Insights from the Sample Survey Data

In the introduction to part 2 we suggested that the survey data available to this study was not very useful for examining regional variations It does, however, present us with an important piece of evidence Two separate analyses of the survey data have suggested that *where a person lives will have an impact on likely church attendance over and above the individual characteristics of that person* The first analysis is of the AVSS where a predictive model of religious orientation was developed It is presented in appendix 2. Various aspects of that analysis will be dealt with in part 3 of this study It is sufficient to note here that several individual level characteristics such as gender, age and level of education were important predictors of religious orientation At the same time the only two residential location indicators in the study — state and size of town in which one lives — were also found to be important.

Secondly, in an analysis of the McNair-Anderson sample not detailed here, census data on the nature of the community in which a person lived were

added to the individual level data available in the survey It was found that the census data on the community of residence made more powerful the predictive models of church attendance.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE WITHIN THE URBAN MOSAIC

The analysis in this chapter has presented strong evidence that, in urban areas, regional variations in church attendance can be very large Our survey data suggest that where a person lives can have an impact on levels of church attendance over and above their individual characteristics The church and census data suggest the overall social make-up of a community can be an important factor affecting the life of a church.

We can summarise the results of this chapter by presenting the attendance rates of churches in the different social contexts for ministy described at the end of chapter 5 The overall penetration of each community type is shown in table 6.8.

Table 6.8 Church Involvement in Different Types of Communities

Participation Rates Per Thousand People in Population (see footnote to table)

Area Type	*Anglican*	*Uniting*	*Baptist*	*Presbyterian*	*Church of Christ*	*Salvation Army*	*Catholic*	*Those claiming no religion*
Stable White Collar Suburbs	20	13	4 2	2 9	1 5	0.3	80	200
New White Collar Communities	23	12	6 4	4 4	2.2	0 9	74	210
Transient Communities	16	6	1 9	3 0	0 7	1 1	72	260
Older Blue Collar Suburbs	9	7	3 6	1 5	1 4	1 9	85	180
New Blue Collar Growth Areas	10	6	1 5	1 0	0 8	0 7	67	190
Multicultural Communities	8	3	2 8	1 1	1 2	1 8	77	180

Note Church involvement figures are attendance rates with two exceptions Baptist figures are of membership and Presbyterian of communicants Comparison of levels between denominations is therefore not possible Information on those claiming no religion is taken from census data

There is consistency in the results of this chapter that point to a fairly coherent picture *Uniting and Anglican attendance rates are highest in the stable white collar dormitory suburbs that are essentially Anglo Saxon in character The attendance rates tend to be lower in areas with high ethnicity, mobility,*

areas that tend to be blue collar communities, which have large numbers of people aged between twenty and forty years of age or which have high levels of family structure diversity or break up.

Given the similarities between the non Catholic patterns on a regional basis, outlined at the outset of this chapter, we can conclude that *in all probability there are also elements of the above present in Baptist, Churches of Christ and Presbyterian patterns* The results in table 6 8 suggest that this is the case Again these churches are strongest in white-collar dormitory suburbs and weakest in new blue-collar communities and, for the Baptists and Churches of Christ, in transient communities Again we note the difference with the Salvation Army pattern, where attendance is highest in older blue collar and multicultural areas. It is important to note that, for smaller denominations, churches are likely to be more regional in nature, drawing from a wide catchment.

The Catholic mass attendance patterns do not show fluctuations to the same degree. There is, relatively speaking, a more random spread of attendance across the whole urban mosaic. However, as we have seen, analysis of the attendance of nominal Catholics suggests that *those in higher status, stable home owning communities are more likely to be regular mass attenders than those in diverse or transient communities or in areas of lower socio-economic status.*

Finally we note that those claiming no religion are reasonably evenly spread across all types of areas except transient communities where they are present in greater numbers

* * *

We have focussed in this chapter on church attendance in urban areas In the following chapter the focus will shift to non-urban communities Reflections on all these results and some of their implications for the churches are contained in chapter 8.

7

ATTENDANCE PATTERNS IN NON-URBAN COMMUNITIES

Very little research has been carried out into church life in non-urban Australia. Church attendance rates differ greatly between different types of non-urban communities. Attendance rates appear higher in small rural communities than in larger regional centres. Communities with stable populations tend to have higher attendance rates than those with more mobile populations. There appears to be some similarity between urban and non-urban patterns.

The differences between rural and city life in Australia have, for a long time, been part of Australian folk lore and literature. Writing 'In Defence of the Bush' A B (Banjo) Paterson took Henry Lawson to task and concluded with the barb 'For the bush will never suit you, and you'll never suit the bush', making the point that there are enduring differences between those who live in the city and those who choose to live in a rural setting. Some research has pointed out the difficulties faced by clergy with a city background as they have sought to adjust to the life and culture of non urban Australia (e g. Dempsey 1986).

Little research has been carried out in Australia into church attendance patterns in different types of non urban communities. This study is a preliminary exploration and where possible church attendance and/or related data have been collected from a range of denominations This has not been an easy task as for the larger denominations it involves several separate dioceses We are limited to data on Uniting, Presbyterian and Baptist churches and Churches of Christ No data have been collected on the Anglican or Catholic churches Presbyterian and Baptist information is on communicants and church membership rather than attendance Whilst there is a relationship they are not directly comparable.

Our data base is therefore somewhat sketchy and less comprehensive than that on attendance in urban areas, so we must be cautious with the wider applicability of the results This must be seen as an exploratory exercise. For all denominations, Bureau of Statistics population estimates have enabled attendance rates per thousand in the population to be calculated These have served as the basis for analysis.

Just as with urban areas, it is a mistake to assume all non urban communities are alike A preliminary analysis of attendance rates in different regions of non-urban NSW was carried out for Uniting, Baptist, Presbyterian and Churches of Christ. The results are in appendix 1. Large regional differences were evident It is our task now to seek a better understanding of the nature of these differences.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN COMMUNITIES OF DIFFERENT SIZE

In chapter 5 was presented a typology of non-urban communities based on their population size In order to investigate church attendance rates, parishes were designated as 'small rural communities' (population of largest town in parish less than 5,000), 'service towns' (population between 5,000 and 10,000) and 'large regional centres (population over 10,000) It is important to note that, whilst we have set up three categories here, they are representative of an underlying continuum For practical reasons outback areas were excluded.

The attendance rates for each type of community are given in figure 7 1 In general, attendance rates are higher in smaller rural communities The larger the town, the lower the attendance rates The Churches of Christ results must be treated with caution, as there are very few churches in the smaller communities.

By contrast there is relatively little fluctuation in the number of people who, at the census, claimed no religious affiliation.

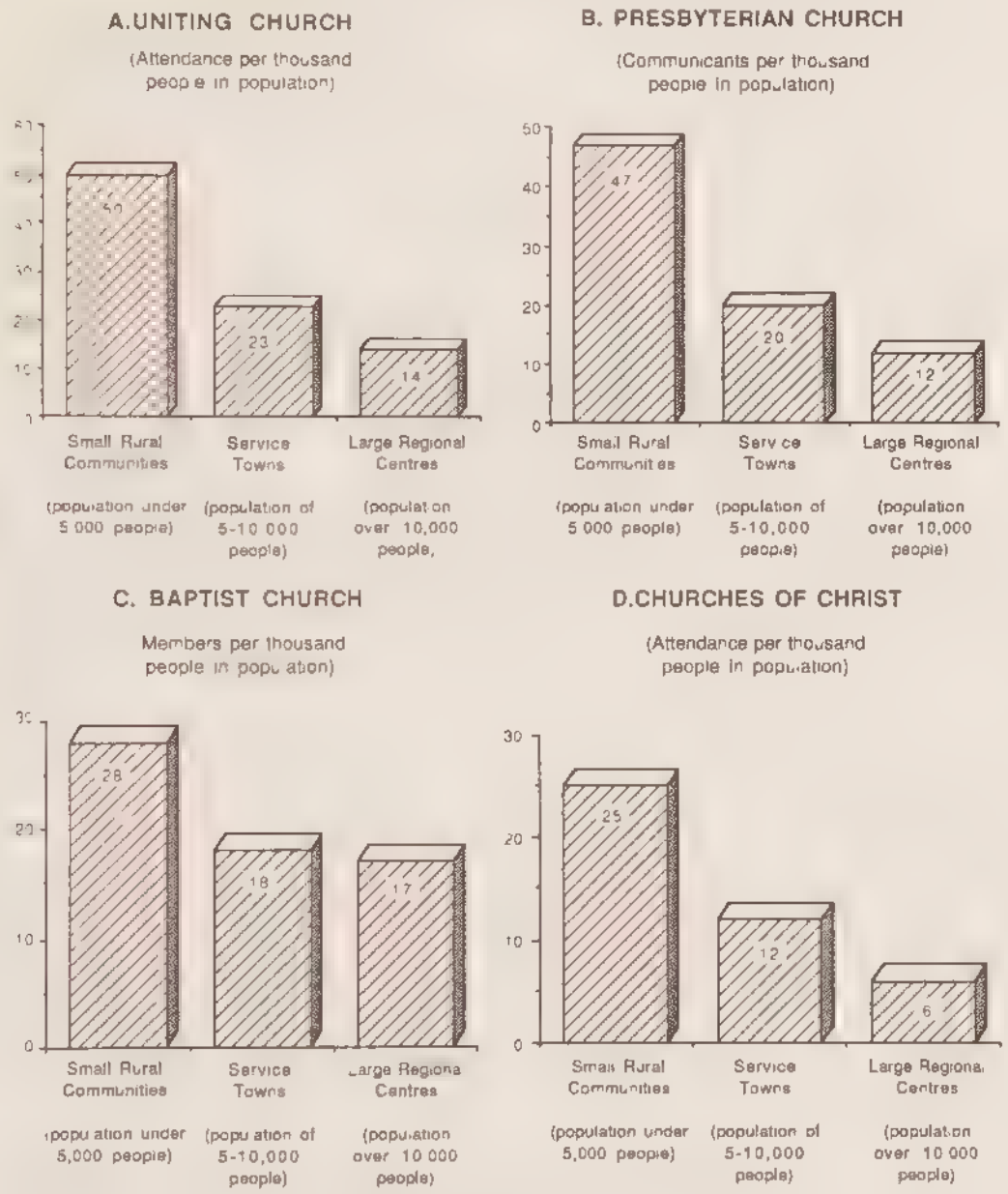
CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMUNITIES

It is possible to investigate these patterns further by using church data alongside census data on each local community Unfortunately, the nature of

the non urban church data available for this study has meant that this is feasible only for the Uniting church The available social profile indicators are listed in appendix 1 Attendance rates were calculated as in the previous chapter on the basis of the population of the whole parish area Some specific results are shown in the text. Others are presented in table 7.6

Figure 7.1 Attendance Rates in Different Sized Communities

Attendance Rates Per Thousand in Population



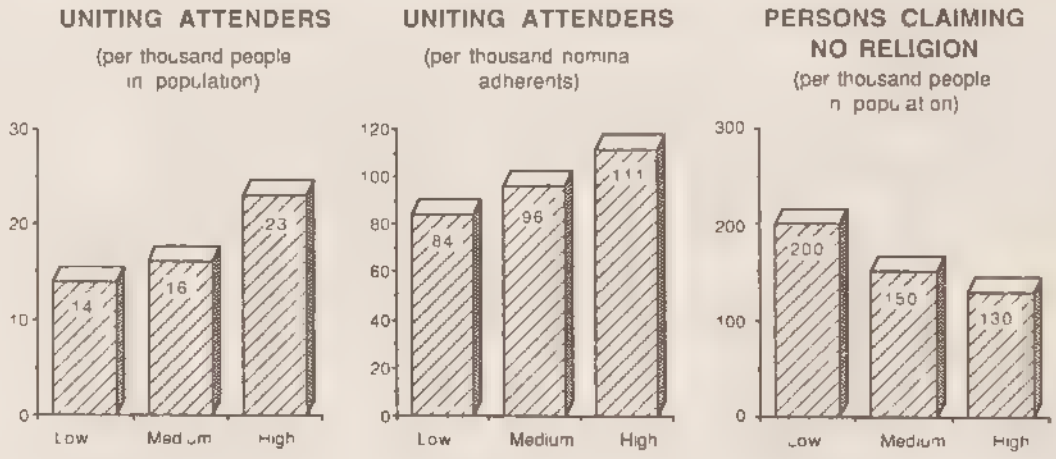
Sources Church and Census Data (see appendix 1)

Note For this figure the population base served by a given church has been taken to be the population of the main town it serves

Housing Tenure and Population Mobility

Attendance rates are much higher in communities with high percentages of the population who own their houses. A look at table 7.6 shows that parishes with the highest home ownership rates have attendance rates two and a half times those with the lowest ownership rates. By contrast, communities with high percentages of people renting or still purchasing their residences tend to have low Uniting church attendance rates. Parishes with few Housing Authority tenants register double the attendance rates of those with large Housing Authority communities. Uniting church attendance is also much stronger in areas where there is a high percentage of residents who have lived there for over five years.

Figure 7.2 Housing Tenure and Levels of Church Attendance



Sources Church and Census Data (see appendix 1)

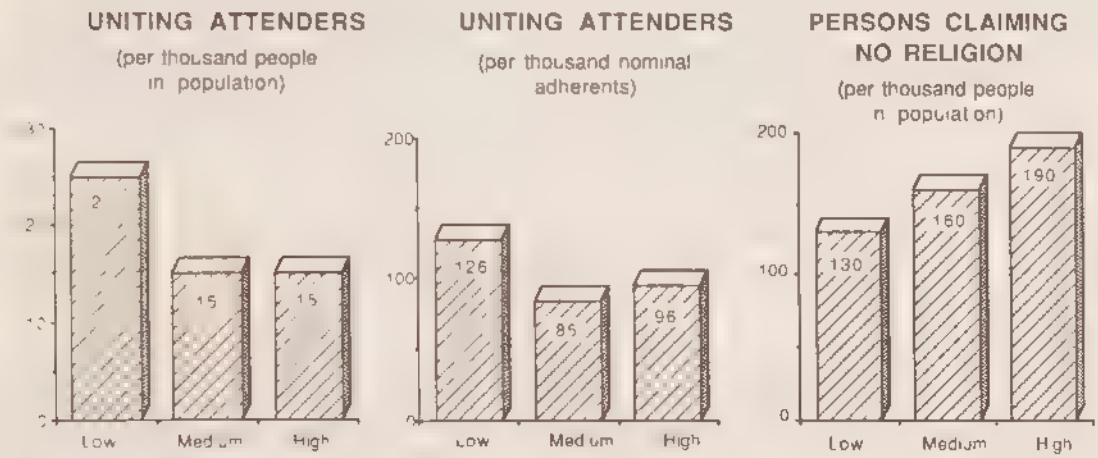
The picture presented here is quite clear. *Attendance is significantly higher in communities with stable, home-owning populations and lower in more mobile, growing or transient communities.* This pattern is certainly not entirely due to a lack of nominal adherents in the more mobile communities. In figure 7.2 variations in the attendance rates of nominal adherents are also shown. It would appear that nominal adherents living in mobile or transient communities are much less likely to be regular attenders at church than their counterparts in more stable communities. This pattern is quite similar to that found in urban areas.

The number of people claiming no religious affiliation at the census appears largely unrelated to the levels of home ownership in a community. As is shown in figure 7.2, however, areas with fewer long-term residents are likely to have high proportions of the population claiming no religious affiliation.

Family Life and Age Predictors

Uniting church attendance rates are highest in stable communities dominated by nuclear families and where there has been little family break up Areas with low percentages of people who are separated or divorced tend to have stronger attendance rates than other areas Parishes with high percentages of people living in families of two parents and dependents register higher attendance rates than other parishes.

Figure 7.3 Church Attendance Variations



Percentage of Community Who Are Separated

Sources Church and Census Data (see appendix 1)

Analysis of the range of available age predictors has reinforced the suggestion that attendance rates tend to be higher in communities with high percentages of young children Further, attendance is higher in older communities and those with few twenty to twenty-nine year olds.

As can be seen in figure 7 4 the pattern persists even if we consider only nominal adherents in each area Certain age groups appear more likely to attend church, people at certain stages of life are more predisposed to become involved.

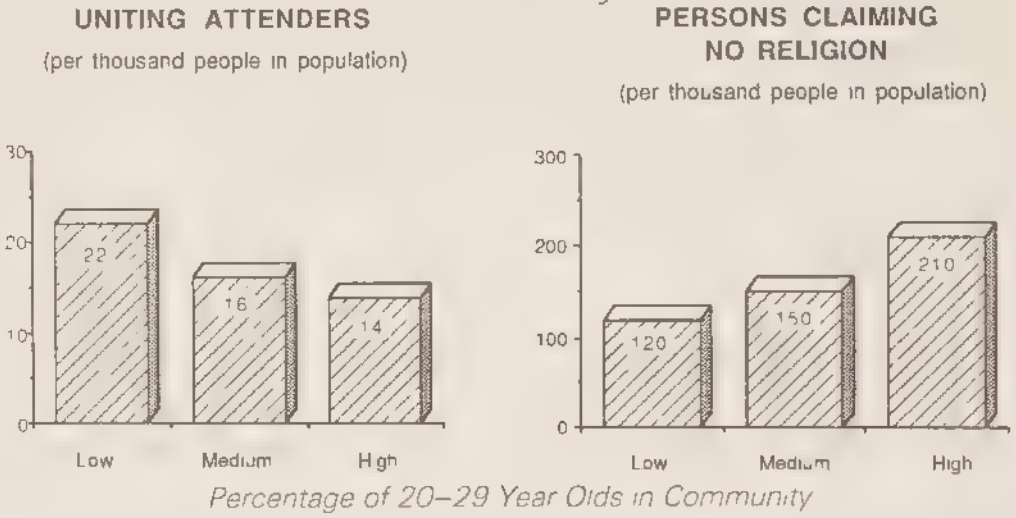
People were more likely to claim no religious affiliation at the census in areas where many are separated or divorced or where there are many twenty to twenty-nine year olds.

The strength of all these patterns suggests that important factors are at work.

Ethnicity

As in urban areas, Uniting church attendance rates are highest in parishes with low percentages of people born overseas, and which are mainly Anglo-

Figure 7.4 Levels of Church Attendance and the Age Profile of a Community



Sources: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1)

Saxon in character. There are, however, no significant correlations between the ethnicity of an area and the attendance rates of nominal adherents. We can conclude that the lower attendance rates at churches in highly multicultural communities reflects a lack of nominal adherents living in such areas.

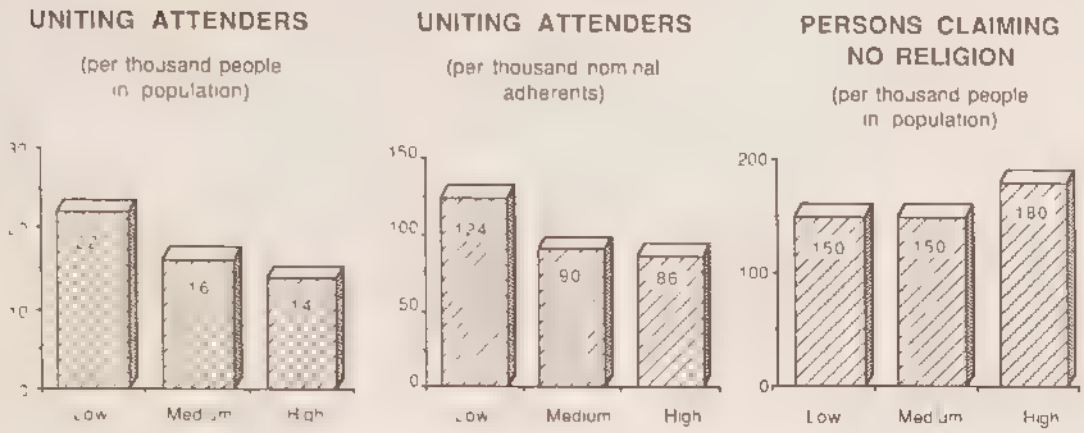
Areas with high percentages of people born overseas appear to be likely also to have higher proportions of the population claiming no religious affiliation. Care needs to be taken with interpretation here as such areas also contain high percentages of people who are separated or divorced and tend to contain large transient populations.

Socio-Economic Status

The educational and occupational data are rather more complex to interpret. In contrast to the data on parishes in the major cities — where social segmentation has meant there is a great spread in these variables — the data on non urban NSW looks at communities in their entirety since towns are not split into several parishes. There is thus a more complete social mix in each parish than we often find in city parishes. This means that generally there will be less dramatic variations in the socio economic indicators than for urban parishes. This has been borne out by examination of the urban and non urban social profile data.

A first inspection of the range of available socio economic predictors produces rather confusing and contradictory findings. In some cases attendance is higher in communities of higher overall socio-economic status, in other cases it is lower, in still others there is no significant relationship.

Figure 7.5 The Ethnicity of a Community and Levels of Church Attendance



Sources: Church and Census Data (see appendix 1)

Closer examination of the data using the technique of multiple regression analysis does help to clarify the picture. The full details are provided in appendix 1. Through this process we can determine the effect of a group of predictors after adjustment for the effects of all the other predictors. The analysis suggests that *for two communities identical in all other respects but differing in socio economic status, attendance rates are likely to be higher in the community with more people of higher socio-economic status.*

By contrast, people are more likely to claim no religious affiliation at all in communities of higher socio economic status. As in urban areas it appears that higher status communities are likely to produce both higher church attendance rates and higher levels of religious disaffiliation. This is an issue to which we shall return in a later chapter.

Table 7.6 Other Social Profile Predictors and Church Attendance

Attendance Per Thousand in Population

	Regular Attenders	*Nominal Adherents*	*People Claiming No Religion*
Percentage of Community Who Own Their House			
— Low	10	74	
— Medium	16	94	N S
— High	26	129	

Table 7.6 — *Continued*

Attendance Per Thousand in Population

	Regular Attenders	*Nominal Adherents*	*People Claiming No Religion*
Percentage Renting Privately			
— Low	25	127	
— Medium	14	85	N.S.
— High	16	92	
Percentage Living in the Same Residence for over Five Years			
— Low	14	84	200
— Medium	16	96	150
— High	23	111	130
Percentage of Community Who Are Separated			
— Low	25	126	130
— Medium	15	85	160
High	15	96	190
Percentage Divorced			
Low	25	120	120
Medium	15	89	150
— High	15	91	200
Percentage of Couples with Dependents in Community			
— Low	14	87	
— Medium	16	94	N.S.
High	23	114	
Percentage of Community Aged between 20 and 29 Years			
— Low	22	124	150
— Medium	16	90	150
— High	14	86	180
Percentage of Community Who Were Born Overseas			
Low	22		120
— Medium	16	N.S.	150
High	14		210
Percentage with No Qualifications			
— Low			200
— Medium	N.S.	N.S.	150
High			130

Note N.S. means not statistically significant at a 5% level

Are There Regional Differences in Church Attendance?

In the analysis of Uniting church attendance patterns we have combined data from across non urban NSW We noted at the outset of this chapter that there are quite considerable variations in the overall attendance rates for the different regions Are these differences simply the result of the differing social composition of different regions or does the region in which a parish is located have an additional impact on church attendance patterns? Would parishes located in different regions but identical on all the census predictors expect different attendance rates?

As in the previous chapter a regression analysis suggests that knowledge of the region in which a community is placed contributes little extra to our ability to predict likely attendance rates *The regional variations in attendance rates appear largely the result of the different social composition of each region.*

So Just How Much Does Social Context Affect Patterns of Attendance?

Multiple regression analysis suggests that a knowledge of the social profile data can enable us to predict 58 per cent of the variations in Uniting church attendance rates in non urban areas Of course, this does not establish a causal link but as in urban areas it certainly suggests that the social context of ministry is an important aspect of understanding likely church attendance patterns.

The actual predictive models are given in appendix 1 They underline the importance of age, socio economic and housing tenure indicators as well as town size They may be useful as an evaluative tool, at least for Uniting churches.

* * *

The results of this analysis reveal some clear trends in Uniting church attendance rates in non urban NSW The patterns are quite similar to those in urban areas *Attendance is higher in the smaller, stable rural communities and lower in more diverse, mobile or larger regional towns Parishes with many twenty to thirty year olds in the community tend to have lower attendance rates After adjustment for other factors it would appear that there is a positive relationship between attendance rates and the socio economic status of an area* If the Uniting church patterns can be seen to be indicative of trends in other denominations then we can conclude that the social context of ministry in non-urban areas is likely to have a large influence on likely church attendance rates.

The results of the last two chapters invite a great deal of further reflection on church attendance in Australia In the following chapter some observations are made on these patterns and their implications for the churches in this country.

8

PATTERNS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE: SOME REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Attendance at church is more common in certain types of communities than in others, a fact not given high prominence in Australian church life. Churches are social institutions very vulnerable to changes in the local community. A social context becoming less condusive to church attendance coupled with an un-preparedness on the part of the church is a recipe bound to produce institutional decline.

The social effects of urbanisation are producing social contexts in which traditional models of church practice are more difficult to sustain. This study suggests that, in simple terms, the more urbanised a community, the lower church attendance rates are likely to be. If churches wish to move beyond their existing clientele, they will need to take seriously the nature of their community and its needs. They will need to develop a new vision which allows for new forms of church practice and ministry as well as a willingness to include different sorts of people and groups into their lives. The existing patterns of church attendance are not unalterable but reflect the relative attractiveness to different groups in the community of existing models of church life, practice and doctrine.

It is clear from the last three chapters that church attendance varies greatly from area to area, suburb to suburb, community to community. These variations between area types highlight the impact of the socio economic status, mobility, ethnicity, age and family structure profiles of the community on likely church penetration of any given area and reflect the different attitudes to the churches amongst different cultural groups within our society. Put another way, the traditional models of church practice and ministry are more viable in some areas than in others.

As has been found overseas, results such as these underscore the tremendous impact of urban location on the churches, an impact that cannot be ignored if church planning is to be realistic. The future of a given church is intimately tied to the character of the community in which it finds itself. The context in which a ministry takes place provides opportunities and places challenges in front of those involved in church life, particularly the churches which are neighbourhood based rather than having a more regional focus. Apparently church life has adapted better — organisationally, culturally and perhaps even theologically — to certain types of contexts and communities and less well to others.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL CONTEXT

In chapter 5 much space was expended describing the diversity of Australian life. It is perhaps surprising then, when one pauses to reflect on the styles and forms of church life, to see just how uniform it is. Of course there are many exceptions, but in general terms one is likely to find the same models of church practice in all areas. It tends to proceed along the lines of a formula — for Protestant churches this usually means a certain style of Sunday worship, a Sunday school, a Ladies' Fellowship and Scripture classes. There appears to be little concern to allow church life to reflect the specific nature of the community which it seeks to serve. It would be quite unacceptable for a clothing manufacturer to produce only one style of garment, or town planners to undertake redevelopment in just one way with no regard to the nature of the area. So too for the churches: the universality of the faith does not mean there cannot be a diversity in its expression.

Every social context is unique. Ray Hermann, in reflecting on ministry in six coal-mining communities within fifty miles of each other in central Queensland, suggested that each required a different approach because of the nature and stage of development, the people and the company attitude, 'to have done the same in each place would have kept me busy, but not effective' (1983, 37). His attitude appears to be an exception rather than the rule amongst clergy and churches in Australia.

We need to understand the issues facing the churches in terms of the social context in which they are placed. Churches can have a more pivotal role in the lives of *smaller rural communities* than they can in larger regional centres or cities. Clergy can have greater influence there with a clearer social role than their city counterparts have. On the other hand, as observers such as

Dempsey (1983) have noted, they tend to come in as outsiders. This can generate distrust and uncertainty.

Whilst church attendance rates tend to be higher in smaller rural communities, because of the small population base many churches face financial difficulties in maintaining a church presence.

At the other end of the spectrum churches in *larger regional centres* must take into account the increasing diversity of their communities. Often these changing realities are obscured by the church's historical traditions as a village or small town church.

White-collar dormitory suburbs usually tend to provide the churches with an accepted social role. This is far from the case in *transient communities* which pose great challenges for the Protestant churches. Congregations developed when the area was a staple dormitory suburb are often in decline and culturally quite different to the population around them. Amalgamation with other congregations creates many problems of its own and usually does very little for reaching the ever-shifting population around them.

For all denominations, the *multicultural communities* present additional challenges. In some cases this is due to a declining base of nominal adherents; in others, questions of ministry involve accommodating the cultural diversity of attenders from different cultural origins. Likewise, in growth areas, particularly *blue collar estates*, additional difficulties are presented by a lack of church plant and clergy on the ground.

INSTITUTIONS VULNERABLE TO CHANGE

The fact that church attendance is much higher in certain types of communities than in others makes the churches as institutions very vulnerable to social change.

In its analysis of the effect of social context on church attendance, this study has taken a slice across society at a particular moment in history. Some churches may be growing, others declining. Rigorous analysis of such patterns would require data collected at different points in time. We can infer from our results, however, that churches in communities experiencing certain types of rapid social change are likely to be most vulnerable. Stable dormitory suburbs that become home to diverse ethnic groups,older areas in the process of decline due to expansion by industry, freeways or commerce, rural villages on the urban fringe rapidly moving towards an urban identity, suburbs experiencing large amounts of home unit development, or non-urban communities faced with large population turnover or growth are all social contexts in which church attendance rates are likely to fall.

I live in a suburb which has experienced just such a dramatic social change over many years. As I indicated in the preface to this study, within a mile of where I live there are five church buildings no longer in use, or facing imminent demise — they are currently empty or in use as a factory, restaurant or welfare centre. There are nearly as many people resident in the area as before, but it has become a different type of community. In some measure, at

least, the closures have been the price these churches paid for their detachment from the new groups moving into the area.

So often churches, developed at a time when the community was quite different, struggle in the new social reality, sometimes becoming refuges for a segment of the community. In more severe cases, the financial viability of a church comes into question and it faces closure.

A church that seeks only to hold on to a past identity when a community begins to change is likely to find itself becoming increasingly redundant to that community. They tend to become *closed systems*, defining their priorities only in terms of their membership, losing sight of the environment around them (Anderson & Jones 1979). In this way, the church becomes unaware of the changes taking place until the changes have proceeded far enough to be threatening. And once a group is threatened, they are more likely to react against the community than respond to it.

A VILLAGE CHURCH IN AN URBAN PRISON

The urbanisation processes that are so characteristic of this century have raised significant problems for planners. For the Christian churches it also raises very important questions. The Christian heritage has for so long been based on rural life. The stable village or town has been the Christian stronghold, missionary agencies have started in the country or in tribal communities and shied away from large cities. Many church traditions have been based around models for the small static *village community*. They assume an essentially 'Christian' community, a good base of people for whom church going is a natural habit, the church as a central part of the social matrix and the minister priest pastor a respected local figure. When the town was first developed, up went the central buildings — post office, council buildings and churches. Ever since then the models for ministry have been minister and building centred. 'outreach' has been far more a case of 'in drag'. The strategy for 'mission' has been to run a Sunday school, thereby socialising the new generation into the religious and societal norms of the old. The links between church and state reinforced the authority of each.

By contrast the processes of urbanisation have produced quite a different social order. There is a wide range of religious beliefs held by a more mobile population living in communities that are always in the process of changing and developing. As we saw in chapter 5, the housing market is producing high levels of social segregation which in turn ensures the maintenance of cultural diversity. So often in the *urban web* in which most Australians live, traditional models of church life are quite inappropriate. That has left the churches as institutions struggling to define their roles. Increasing secular involvement in socialisation, education and welfare — the areas in which churches have previously performed an important role in society — has further confused this issue. There are many people for whom over many generations church-going has never been a natural habit and for whom the church is an irrelevant or alien place looked after by clergy whose role they do not understand or

respect. *Many churches are struggling to regain a vision of their role and purpose in this time of transition.*

In such times it is essential for the churches to re-examine constantly their actions and priorities. Sometimes what are assumed to be assets are in fact liabilities, inhibiting growth and change. Just ask an inner city minister how he feels about his National Trust classified nineteenth-century church building, capable of seating five hundred, where morning service is normally thirty five people! Ask the minister in a church in a rapidly developing housing estate area about that really long serving church member who has worshipped in the village church for thirty years (and his parents and grandparents before him), the one who can remember when the area was just paddocks and when people were so friendly. Or the Christians from blue collar industrial areas who have struggled to 'succeed' educationally only to discover that university training (or even theological training) has so distanced them from their peers that they can no longer easily share their faith with them.

Many of the facets of urbanisation affect one community more than others; the effects of multiculturalism or structural unemployment provide examples of this. However, the underlying processes have an impact on all communities. Thus the issues of appropriate models for church life and ministry in highly urbanised, industrial or transient communities, where existing practice has produced low levels of church attendance, have something to teach churches in all areas, even those in areas tending to produce higher levels of church attendance.

The research of Kenneth Dempsey into life in small rural communities provides an illustration of this (1983, 1986). This study suggests that in general such communities produce the highest church attendance rates. Yet studying particular rural communities, Dempsey has observed the changing place of the churches and of religion in the lives of local residents. No matter what size a town might be, it is not a homogeneous structure but contains a status and power hierarchy which reflects a diversity of economic interests (1983, 27). Within the towns he has studied he is rather pessimistic about the future of the churches other than the Catholic church. The differences in expectation of clergy and laity about the nature of church life, their different social backgrounds, a generally lukewarm attitude to the churches in the community and the church's alliance with more privileged sections of the community are some of the factors creating this pessimism. There can be criticisms of his work, and perhaps there are other towns where the future is less gloomy. Nevertheless Dempsey's work suggests, as has some other research (e.g. Drayton 1986), that in the very social contexts where church attendance is highest — the small rural communities — there are dramatic changes taking place. The viability of the standard village model of church life and ministry is increasingly in question.

All too often church leaders tend to highlight the successful churches without regard to the social context in which a church is placed. In many cases these contexts may be relatively condusive to church attendance. This study would tend to suggest that analysis of 'successful' churches needs to take place within a clear social framework. *Whilst highly urbanised communities may*

provide the greatest headaches for church planners and clergy. It is these areas from which lessons may emerge about church practice and ministry that might provide direction for the churches in all types of communities

THE END OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?

There are many who would argue that an end product of processes of urbanisation is the demise of the significance of the local community in people's lives. If the bulk of churches are local churches, then any change in the significance of the local community will greatly affect their fate.

There have been changes in the place of the local community in modern society. Increased mobility has fundamentally altered the shape of our lives and the way our local communities operate. Car ownership has increased from one person in ten to one in two since 1939 (Horvath and Tait 1984).

The effect of the motor car and other forms of rapid transport has meant that many people in our society do not look for their primary and secondary relationships within their geographic locality. Increasingly people's sense of community is 'interest centred' rather than 'geographically centred'. One's identity becomes more *what one does* rather than simply *where one lives* (e.g. Webber 1970).

Thus in modern society community may not necessarily be defined spatially. Social networks may spread across a city. In his analysis of social relationships in Belconnen, a relatively new suburban area of the ACT, Prior discovered that very few had close relatives living in the area. When asked the residential location of their closest friend, nearly 70 per cent listed places outside of Belconnen (1980: 112). Many residents tended to establish social relationships or participate in clubs or organizations well outside their own neighbourhood.

Belconnen may not be typical. It is quite likely that patterns will vary between different types of communities. It is however clearly indicative of a trend. People work with one group of friends, play sport with another, and so on. Often they have less invested in the local community because so few of their needs are met there. One of the primary requirements of their local neighbourhood is privacy!

A range of studies have predicted the eventual disappearance of the local community as a definable unit. The influence for some of this work has been the writings of people such as Ferdinand Toennies (1887) and Louis Wirth (1938). Writing a century ago, Toennies described two ways in which people could be bound together. The first, which he described as 'Gemeinschaft' was characterised by warm and enduring relationships encompassing all of life — work, family, religion and culture. Neighbourhood was the basis of their union. On the other hand, he used the word 'Gesellschaft' to refer to large scale, impersonal and contractual ties. Such relationships are not necessarily locally based. Wirth suggested that urban life involved a shift in emphasis away from primary relationships towards a range of secondary relationships.

Many modern writers have also taken up these themes. Alvin Toffler, for instance, commented that 'never before have man's relationships with place

been more numerous, fragile and temporary . we are witnessing a historic decline in the significance of place to human life'(1970, 75).

Other writers, however, are hesitant of such dire predictions and expect the significance of local communities to continue. People such as Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (1921, 1925) have argued that urbanisation creates a range of different social contexts and forms of social networks within the larger urban centre In their understanding, the local community maintains its importance although it takes different forms in different places.

From a study in an urban neighbourhood in the USA, Donald Foley (1952) concluded that city life involved a balance between 'vestigial' local community patterns and an array of metropolitan level relationships A quarter of a century later Albert Hunter (1975) replicated Foley's work and suggested that there had been little decline in the levels of local interaction or residents' sense of community However, he did note a decline in the use by local residents of local facilities, including shopping and entertainment facilities and, to a lesser extent, the churches.

Other research has highlighted the fact that even with large urban centres there can remain '*urban villages*' where residents have strong local ties and identity (Gans 1962). Obviously ethnic ties can help create such enclaves, although they sometimes also develop amongst the families of blue-collar workers in some traditional working class communities.

An important contribution to an understanding of the social construction of local communities has come from work by John Kasarda and Morris Janowitz (1974) They explored people's participation and involvement in the life of their local communities in Great Britain They argue that variations in participation in local associations are not essentially related to the size of the community or its population density. Rather, they suggest that it is related to variables such as a person's social position, stage in the life cycle and particularly to their length of residence in the community Whilst there have been criticisms of this work (e.g. Freid 1982), it does provide a useful framework in which we can view church attendance patterns In subsequent chapters we shall look more closely at a range of these variables and their effect on church attendance.

One has to be careful then about statements regarding the significance of the local community In keeping with one of the themes of this study, this is likely to vary considerably between one neighbourhood and another Perhaps it would be most accurate to suggest that modern social processes are refashioning the local community alongside other social units such as the family. In the process the role and strategies of local organisations such as the churches must also be refashioned.

RESPONDING TO A TIME OF TRANSITION — IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCHES

If it is true that 'the greatest enemy of any institution is change', then it is not surprising that the local church, with its emphases on tradition, stability and

unchangeability, is likely to face times of re evaluation of priorities and roles in eras of rapid social change such as ours (Walruth 1979, 248) It is important for churches to reflect closely on what it means to be the church in modern day Australia If there is a real desire to alter the current church attendance patterns to penetrate more effectively the range of social contexts in this country, then it is important not to simply maintain existing structures or ways of operating, for their own sake.

The churches are facing a choice they can continue as before and provide a service to a declining percentage of their nominal adherents, thus becoming more marginal to Australian life Alternatively they can develop more outward goals, seeking to be involved with any or all people If such an option involves a priority on bridge building between church and community, then there is a prospect of altering some of the patterns of church attendance detailed in the last few chapters.

In the conclusions to this study we shall examine in more detail the implications of this study for the churches, in the light of the model presented in chapter 4 of factors affecting the church in the local context. Some brief comments may be of assistance here.

Seeking to Understand the Local Context

As we have seen, the local context will present challenges or open up possibilities for congregations and church groups It is almost always a part of the rhetoric of churches that they are part of the local community and seek to serve it. Such words need to be backed by quality action based on understanding the needs, hopes and struggles of those in the community who attend church and those who do not *Understanding might only be a first step, but it is fundamental to all others* What is the range of cultural groups represented? What are their needs hopes and aspirations? How has the community changed over the last ten years? What is likely to happen in the next ten? What resources exist in the neighbourhood? Are there adequate community health or welfare facilities? What is the view of the area amongst service professionals (teachers doctors, etc)? Information on local areas is readily available from government departments, local council planners and from others in the welfare network Different people can provide a different perspective on the same area It can all help fill out a picture that would help the churches in the development of their own ministries.

It is important for churches to look at the diversity of those attending church Are the different social groups in the community also represented in church life?

An understanding of and connection with the wider community is particularly relevant to churches in areas undergoing rapid social change A church cannot necessarily affect the direction of social change, but it is responsible for the way it reacts to it and meets the challenges it presents This requires intentional awareness, planning and adjustment, particularly from church leadership Whilst some in the congregation may be developing a

vision for the place of the church in the new era, others are still viewing the church in its old context. It is important for congregations to be encouraged through this period, for fear can be paralysing. Churches which recognise the signs of change in advance of its impact are likely to be able to respond and plan to meet the new challenges.

The Community As a Living Organism

Understanding a community must go far beyond a static picture of population mix and available services. If the churches are to develop a ministry into the reality of a community, they need to put some life into their understanding of their local area.

A community is a living network of people relating to each other in quite different ways. In fact it will contain many networks of people overlapping each other and reaching out into the wider society. Networks can be of many types — based around family and relatives, around the workplace, special interests, local neighbourhood contacts and so on. The nature of these networks may vary substantially between communities, depending on the profile of residents (their socio economic status, stage in the life cycle, etc.) and their length of residence in the area. There may be varying levels of '*encapsulation*' of the local community (Hannertz 1980, 256) — the degree to which social relationships are contained within a local community. Ministry in an 'urban village' where life is highly focussed on the local area, will be quite different from ministry in an area where networks are spread city-wide. Maximal encapsulation would involve people who live, work, play and have their kin in a local area.

In a highly encapsulated community, people are likely to have rather narrow horizons. On the other hand in an area where people's networks are not encapsulated locally but rather spread across a city, people may find themselves living at one time in several different social worlds (two or more well separated networks).

Within a given community various segments may live their lives within quite different types of networks. Whilst a mother may exist largely within one encapsulated local community, someone in the work force may exist in several much wider and more diverse networks simultaneously. The teenager in a street gang or the immigrant family may relate through different sorts of networks and have different horizons from the post-graduate student at university or the elderly couple in a retirement village.

So, for the churches, understanding an area must involve the discernment of the social networks that operate in the community — political networks, school connections, street gangs, commerce groups, drug connections, trade unions, welfare networks. How do they operate? Who controls community decisions? Who are powerless and marginalised in local life? What are the accepted norms, values and moral codes of the various social groups in the area?

Understanding the nature of the existing networks can be a first step to tapping into them. The most effective communication is likely to occur along the networks. Each network has its own grapevine and gossip channels — unofficial, informal but highly effective. Often there are central *network figures* who have an important role in a local network. A local corner shop keeper may be a central agent of communication in a neighbourhood; the caretaker in a large block of units may be another. Such network figures may or may not also be the *gatekeepers* to the network. Gatekeepers are those who wield power within a group, having a major stake in determining values and norms, and determining who can or cannot enter the network. Such people can be particularly powerful in groups with a strong sense of corporate identity. Then again there may be the '*flack catchers*' — a term coined by Tom Wolfe (1970) to describe a person who, in our terms, is sent out from a network or group to test a stranger with a view to his credibility or trustworthiness or to float a network idea to the outside world — or '*brokers*' — people with credibility in more than one network who can act as bridge people between groups.

Identifying gatekeepers, network figures, brokers or flack-catchers is essential if churches are to become involved with a particular network of people in a given area. People within the life of a church who have credibility in local networks and who therefore can act as brokers (and flack catchers!) become important assets to the ministry of a church in a very significant way. Identification of such people therefore becomes an important exercise for a local church in planning.

Such credibility is indeed a gift to be valued, although too often it goes unrecognised in the local church.

Regional or Local Churches?

In an earlier section we noted that the processes of urbanisation are altering the nature of life in local areas but not necessarily destroying the significance of the local community. It follows then that there can still be a place for local organisations (such as churches) but they will need to analyse carefully the nature of the communities in which they stand. Churches in all communities should take seriously the warning contained in one of the main conclusions of this section: that church attendance is likely to be much lower in areas experiencing high population turnover or transience or where the attachment to the local community is only slight.

In such circumstances, analysis of the 'interest-based' networks of those living in the area can provide a starting point for churches to tap into a more regional constituency. Such 'interest based' churches have tended to grow in transient inner urban communities. In inner Sydney, for example, there are within a few kilometres of each other two churches based around the networks of university students, one church seeking to work with people who have been

previously hurt in their experience of church life, several ethnic congregations, and a church that has sought to become the regional charismatic church for their denomination. In each case they have tapped into a network of people of a particular type and, in the process, shifted toward a more regional emphasis.

Both local and regionally focussed churches can have a place within the urban web of modern life. It is not so much a question of either/or as it is a matter of discernment of direction, given the nature of both the local context and the local church.

PART 3

Factors Affecting Church Attendance

It is quite clear from the preceding section that the nature of a community has a large impact on likely church attendance rates. Factors such as the socio-economic make-up of a community, its age profile, family structure and ethnicity, the mobility of its residents, and the housing tenure profile repeatedly emerged as important determinants of the likely fortunes of churches

In part 3 we seek to understand these effects in more detail. To do so we shall use the Australian Values Study Survey (AVSS), McNair-Anderson and older sample survey data to examine in turn the differences in church attendance due to gender, socio economic status, age and stage in life, residential mobility and ethnicity. One or two chapters will be devoted to each factor. The analysis of each factor stands on its own; chapters need not be read in sequence.

For each factor, a presentation is given of its effect on church attendance on a denomination-by-denomination basis. Regular attenders are defined as those attending church at least once a month. Where applicable, data are also provided on changes in this pattern over the last thirty years. Relevant research, both overseas and local, is described and where possible tested against the data in the present study. Theoretical models and, on occasions, historical material helping to explain these patterns are given and the implications for the churches drawn out.

For this section of the 'Who Goes Where?' study it is important to understand that church attendance is but one aspect of a person's religious orientation. This was dealt with in detail in chapter 3. In each chapter the patterns of church attendance are set within the wider framework of the various dimensions of religious orientation.

9

WHERE ARE THE MEN?

In a whole range of ways men show themselves to be less religious than women. They are less regular attenders at church, less regular in prayer, less likely to hold to traditional Christian beliefs or to report having experiences of the supernatural. A great many reasons can be put forward for this. The survey data used in the 'Who Goes Where?' study underline two critical issues for the churches:

- *Amongst young adults the church attendance rates of women fall to nearly that of men. Can it be assumed that as they grow older their attendance will increase?*
- *The attendance rates of women in full-time employment are very close to those of men. In an era of increasing female involvement in the workforce, such a pattern would have a great impact on church attendance. Relating to the concerns and experiences of those in the workplace must become an important issue for the churches.*

In one of the busiest streets in Sydney there is a large church with a noticeboard on which it presents catchy messages to the wider world. Directly across the road is another meeting place — a local pub — which has taken

upon itself the role of replying to the church messages in a way that is good natured although often sceptical.

If one were to ask many church people, particularly Protestants, about the social environment in which they would feel least comfortable, the answer would often be the pub scene. The pub has a central place in Australian society. It provides a place to relax, to talk and meet friends, to get away from the cares and pressures of the outside world. It has traditionally been a male stronghold and part of the identity of the Australian male. For many reasons Australian church people have shied away from the pub. The cultural barriers are many and varied. The pub and church have often stood on opposite sides of the road, sceptical about each other and meeting the social needs of quite different groups in the community. If you were to ask in the churches where all the men were, the answer may be to point across the road to the local watering hole.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CHURCH ATTENDANCE — THE LAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Commentators and church people have often referred to the lack of men attending their churches. Typical of such comments is the title of a paper on the subject 'The Australian Male: Roadblock to Revival' (Drayton 1981).

There has been consistent agreement in research that women are more religious than men. This is borne out by opinion poll data over the last twenty five years, shown in figure 9.1. For men, the 1960s saw a sharp decline in attendance levels. The decline for women appears more constant throughout the period since 1960.

Hans Mol looked at gender differences in a range of religious questions. He found that women claimed to be more religious. For each denomination, women were seen to be better attenders by about six to seven percentage points.

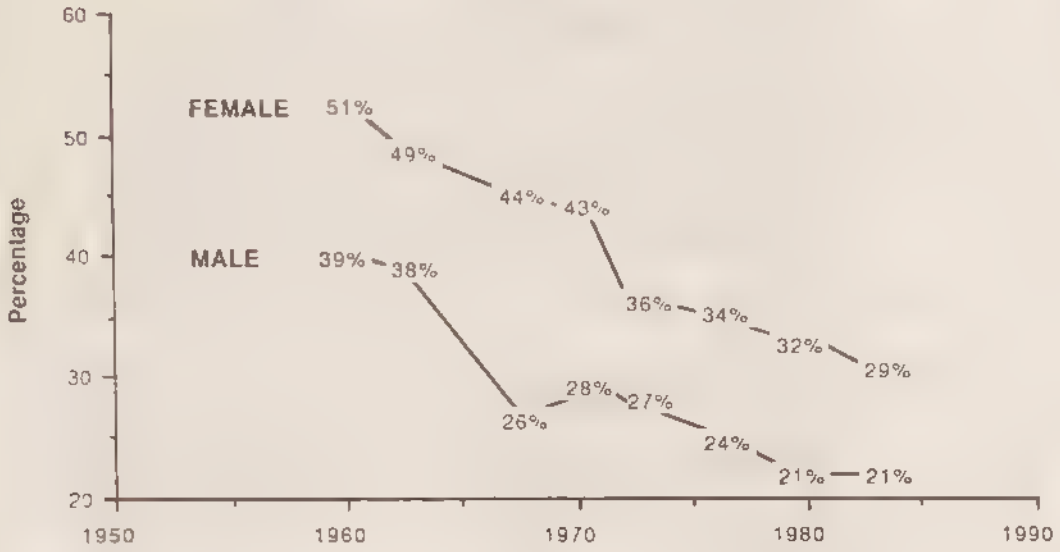
Data on gender differences in church attendance in the present study come largely from McNair Anderson surveys and the AVSS and are shown in figure 9.2. Overall both surveys suggest that women are better church-goers by around eight percentage points. This difference is found amongst both Anglicans and Catholics in the surveys. Gender differences in the 'Other Christian' category were not statistically significant. The Uniting church, Methodists and Presbyterians in the two samples differ considerably from each other. Whilst both suggest that women are better church-goers and that the differences are statistically significant, they differ widely in the degree of difference. This is presumably due to sampling fluctuations.

Males were more likely to claim to have no religion: 15 per cent compared to only 9 per cent of females. Further, 58 per cent of males said they had not been to church for over twelve months, compared to 46 per cent of females.

A profile of those who have attended church within the last month is given in table 9.3. Also included is some information on attenders at the Christian

Figure 9.1 Gender Differences in Church Attendance 1960–1983

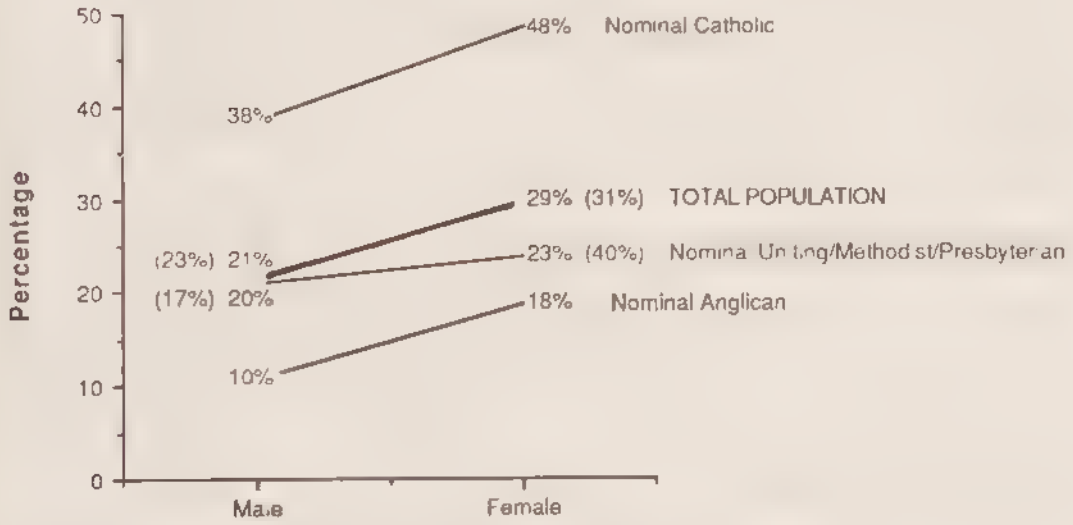
Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



ces Various social surveys (see appendix 4 for deta

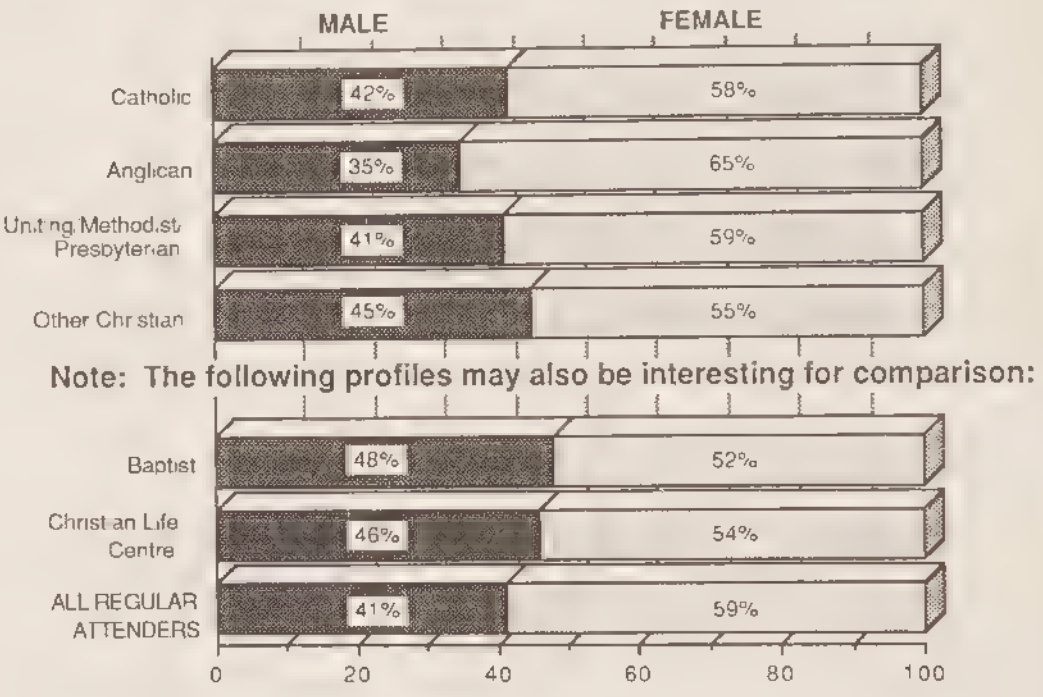
Figure 9.2 Gender Differences in Church Attendance (1983/84)

Percent of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources McNair-Anderson and AVSS (figures in brackets are those from the AVSS)

Figure 9.3 A Profile of Regular Church Attenders (1983)



Sources McNair-Anderson, except CLC data which comes from church records

Life Centre, one of the largest Assemblies of God churches in Sydney. The gender differences are most marked amongst Anglicans and least marked amongst Baptists and those from the Christian Life Centre, contrary to what is sometimes suggested by American research (e g Moberg 1962, 397)

Gender and Other Aspects of Religious Orientation

Using the data available in the AVSS the gender differences in church attendance can be compared to differences in other dimensions of religious orientation.

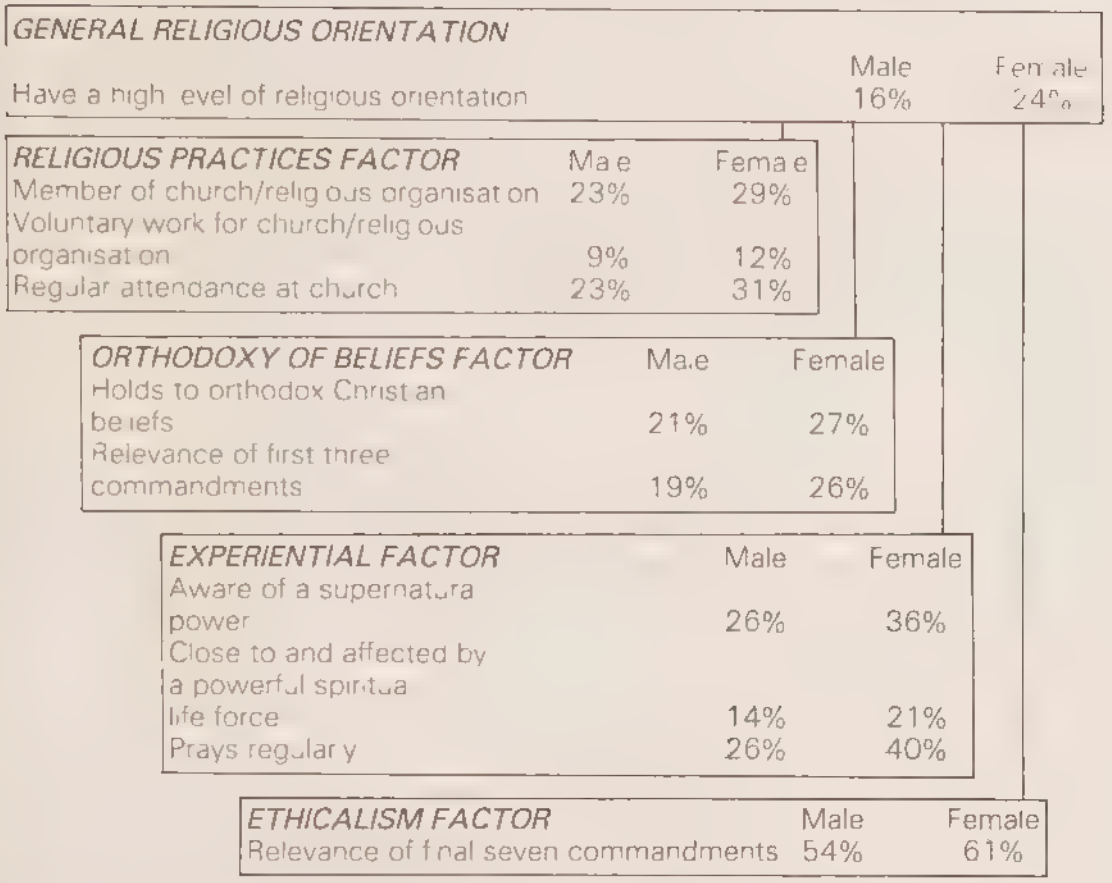
The results are shown in table 9 4 These results are essentially mirrored in each of the denominational groups.

As can be seen, the gender differences are not restricted to church attendance or the dimension of public religious practice Rather the differences are present in nearly all aspects of religious orientation It is most pronounced in the area of beliefs and private devotional practice.

Gender and Age

The gender differences within different age groups reveal an important pattern. Gender differences are greatest amongst older people.

Figure 9.4 Gender Differences in Religious Orientation (1983)



Source: AVSS (see appendix 2 for details of each variable)

This pattern of decreasing gender differences amongst younger people is mirrored in both the McNair Anderson and AVSS data. This result should provide little joy for the churches. As will be seen in the chapters on age differences, the eighteen to thirty years age group are the poorest attenders at church. As Peter Marshall has commented, it is highly likely that female church attendance amongst young adults has dropped to approach that of men (1984, 4 and 1985, 4). If that is the case, then in all likelihood overall attendance rates will drop again with the passing of time.

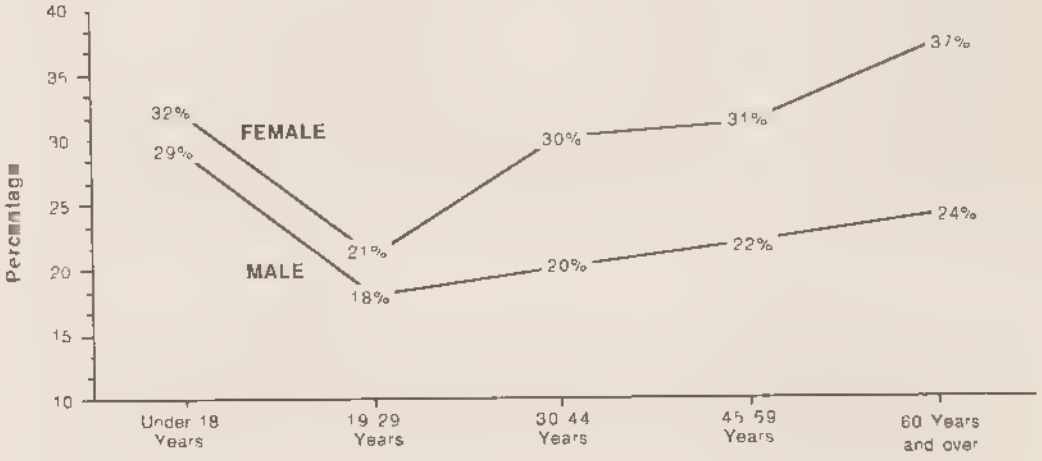
Apart from levels of attendance much of the workload in churches is borne by women. A decline in female attendance rates is likely to result in labour shortages within the life of the churches.

EXPLAINING GENDER DIFFERENCES

A great many explanations have been put forward to explain why women are apparently more religious than men. Many of these ideas have not been

Figure 9.5 Gender Differences in Church Attendance for Different Age Groups (1983)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source McNair-Anderson

empirically tested, certainly not within the Australian context. They are presented here to help provide insights into the complex factors working to produce the gender differences in religious orientation. Three basic categories of explanations are treated. Firstly, some ideas related to gender differences in Australian culture are explored. Secondly, a range of socio-psychological theories is summarized. Finally, issues related to gender differences in workforce participation are examined in the light of available survey data.

Gender Differences and Australian Culture

Various writers have spoken of the emotional inhibitions of Australian males. In *Kangaroo*, written in 1921, D. H. Lawrence described them as 'hollow'. 'They are marvellous and manly and independent and all that on the outside. But inside they are not. When they are quite alone, they do not exist' (p. 146). Ronald Conway in *The Great Australian Stupor* (1971) speaks of this as the 'withheld' self. Reflecting on these ideas, Dean Drayton has disagreed that the Australian male is hollow but rather considers that what is there is deeply protected and difficult to deal with (1981, 2). Because of this he believes that men tend not to want to deal with the ultimate issues raised by close dealings with religion. Pat Brennan suggests that the emotional inhibition of Australian males is likely to mean that the churches' emphasis on intimacy and relationships will be daunting to the ordinary bloke (1983, 30).

According to this analysis men feel themselves safer across the road in the pub. If motherhood is the dominant ideology for women in Australia then the counter myth for men, according to Brennan, is 'mateship' (1983, 30). Many writers on Australian culture underline the importance of mateship. It is a brotherly comradeship forged to combat the extremes of an alien land and a repressive authority. The church is seen as an element of 'authority'. Women are seen to be more able to cope with authority under the motherhood myth than men under mateship. It is unsurprising then that the gender differences in church attendance are as they are.

No doubt there is some truth in such an analysis. However we must also search for more general theories into which these Australian patterns can be fitted. gender differences in religious orientation are not confined to Australia but are evident in many other nations and cultures.

Socio-Psychological Explanations

Some writers suggest that, as God is projected as a father, it follows that women will be more attracted to religion than men (Argyle 1975, 77). Others have preferred explanations based on supposed differences in the *biological* make up of men and women. This has taken various forms. It has been argued that females are less aggressive and more fearful than males, that this is biologically determined and predisposes women more towards religion (Gray quoted in Argyle 1975, 77). Other writers have postulated that these differences between males and females are the result of *upbringing*, due to the cultural context rather than biological make up. This takes many forms.

It has been suggested that in most cultures training of girls places emphasis on interdependence, obedience and responsibility whilst for boys the emphasis tends to be on independence and self reliance. Males are seen in most cultures to be less emotionally expressive. Since religion relies on the characteristics emphasised in the upbringing of women it is unsurprising that they tend to be more religious. It is this line that Hans Mol adopts. He opts for an explanation that sees women as more traditionally involved in 'conflict resolving, emotionally healing, integrating functions'. By contrast, males are socialised into more aggressive, positive but often conflict-based orientations (Mol 1971, 31).

A variant of these theories is to argue that women experience more guilt feelings than men. If one of the effects of religion is to relieve guilt feelings then women should be more religious (Argyle 1975, 77).

Some have suggested the *child rearing* role of women encourages commitment to the church (Lazerwitz, 1961, Martin, 1967, Moberg, 1962). Whilst religious education for children is still seen to be important and women have the primary role in child rearing, then they can accomplish this in part by setting an example themselves. There is evidence in the 'Who Goes Where?' study that the existence of school age children in a family increases the likelihood of church going. This is dealt with in chapter 12. There is no

evidence however that this affects females only and is therefore unlikely to explain gender differences completely

There is a range of theories which suggest that people without power or status in mainstream society and who are suffering deprivation of some sort are the ones most likely to turn to religion as a means of compensation Such *deprivation theories* are very common in research literature but have come under attack from many quarters Related to gender differences it is argued that women are often deprived of the achievement and social status outlets that are available to men through careers Women can therefore gain social status in church life when they lack opportunities elsewhere (Moberg 1962, 399).

Various arguments have been put forward around the theme that church life is geared more to women than men. These generally start from the emphasis of church life on the family. The focus of so much church life and effort on running a Sunday school and teaching religion to the young has been seen to be more central to the concerns of women than men (e.g. Howard 1983). The social life of churches is not so important for men who can gain social contact and friends through work centred connections.

The fact that men are more likely to be involved in full-time work whereas women are more likely to be child rearers has been central to many of the diverse explanations presented here. It is possible to test the impact of workforce participation on religious orientation using the AVSS data.

Religion and Work

Put in its simplest form, it is often argued that participation in the workforce is likely to reduce religious commitment. Those who work have less time for church or less need for it socially or for self-esteem (Glock, Ringer and Babbie 1967, Moberg 1962, 399) Workforce participation provides alternative sources of identity, interests and commitments whereas those not working are to a degree sheltered from secular pressures and ideas (Lenski 1953, 535)

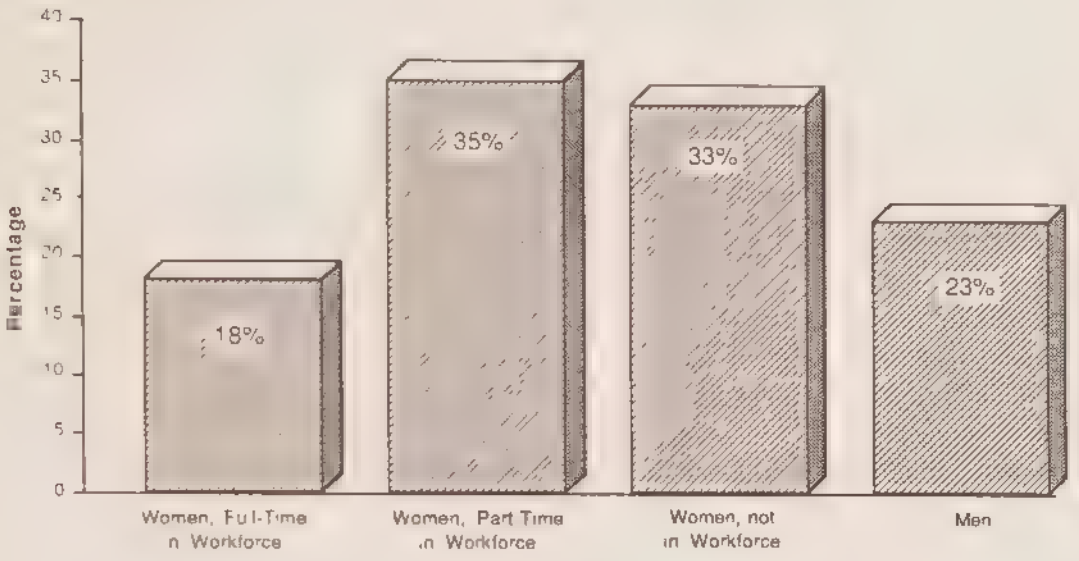
The most recent supporter of the workforce explanation in the Australian context has been David de Vaus (1985) He argued that if there are religious differences between men and women because fewer women are in the workforce, then the religious differences between working men and women should be less than between men and women in general He used data from the AVSS to show that this was the case.

Table 9.6 shows the attendance rates of women broken into categories depending on the nature of their participation in the workforce.

As can be seen the participation of women in the workforce seems to make a substantial difference to their attendance rates De Vaus (1985) has carried out an analysis of the AVSS showing similar trends for most of the religious variables Moreover, he carried out further statistical analysis which showed that the workforce effect was not due to social differences between those women who work full-time and those who do not

Figure 9.6 Church Attendance and Participation in the Workforce (1983)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources: AVS

On the other hand, comparing the attendances rates of men and women who work full time reveals little difference. This is in marked contrast to the overall gender differences presented in table 9.2.

In appendices 2 and 3 are presented the results of more complex statistical analysis of both the McNair Anderson data and the AVSS. The effects of gender on church attendance and religious orientation are examined after the impact of all other variables has been taken into account. In such a way one can determine whether the gender differences that we have examined can be explained by other characteristics, including the different levels of participation in the workforce of men and women.

The results of that analysis, particularly of the AVSS, suggest that workforce participation is an important predictor of religious orientation. In both cases, however, the results suggest that, even after adjusting for the effects of all other variables, there is still a small but significant difference in the religious orientation of men and women. The AVSS analysis reveals that these differences are most pronounced in the area of orthodoxy of beliefs and in questions probing a general religious orientation.

This study, then, lends some empirical support to the workforce participation thesis of David de Vaus and others whilst suggesting that it is not a complete solution to explaining gender differences De Vaus himself found that this pattern was quite different from the American experience (1984, 247) where, he argues, it is more acceptable to be religious and where elements of religion are used to justify the ethics of the market place (1985, 6). These differences again highlight the care that must be taken in making comparisons between religious experiences and practice in the USA and in this country.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCHES

The changing role of women in society has contributed to the changing patterns of family life in urban Australia. Increasing workforce participation has been embedded into the structures of society Unless one has been born into wealth, economic structures demand that two incomes are needed to purchase that dream home The added difficulties this places on single parent families are obvious. For some women, participation in the workforce is an important fulfillment in their lives For others it is a necessity that adds yet another burden to an already stressful situation.

For the churches, these changes provide many challenges That unpaid, unseen army of helpers who have kept the wheels of the church running — those women not in the workforce — are becoming less plentiful.

Our study tends to suggest that for women who are in full time paid employment (as compared to those in full time child rearing) the level of church-going is more akin to that of men In a society in which women are an increasingly significant part of the workforce this is an issue that needs a great deal of careful thought as it will increasingly affect church life.

De Vaus comments that the impact of workforce participation on church attendance may not simply be the provision of alternative social outlets, values, identity or constraints on time available for church involvement He notes that subordinate groups often adopt the values of dominant groups. The workplace is still largely dominated and controlled by men It is possible, he suggests, that women in the workplace are adapting to the values and views perceived to be those of men (1985, 6).

Peter Marshall (1984) and Alan Nichols (1984) are two who have argued that churches have retreated to dealing with private and family-centred issues, that those caught up in the issues of the workplace find little help, understanding or support from the churches. To attend church and to work is to participate in two quite separate and often conflicting worlds. They urge the churches to step out and seek to understand and engage in the complex issues that emerge from the workplace.

Understanding is clearly an important first step Many churches have utilised men's fellowships and gatherings as places to start such a process Particularly useful can be venues where the ideas of people well outside church life can be shared and discussed

In some of the explanations proposed to explain gender differences it was implied that the forms and structures of the churches were more appropriate to the concerns and skills of women. Churches need therefore to consider ways of involving men and valuing the contributions that they can give.

Lyle Schaller (1983) suggests two types of clergy likely to encourage male involvement. The first is the pastor who has come into the ministry later in life following years in a secular vocation, such a man is likely to better understand life in the workplace. The second is the female pastor who, he claims, is more likely to understand the intricacies of relationships within a parish. But that raises a whole new set of issues. I wonder what would be said in the pub about that!

10

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS — PATTERNS AND TRENDS

Church attendance in Australia tends to be higher amongst those of higher socio-economic status. People in professional occupations or with high levels of formal education are more likely to be regular attenders than those with little formal education or who work in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations.

This study shows that patterns of church attendance in this regard are not reflected in other aspects of religious orientation. Those of higher socio-economic status are more likely than others to claim no religious affiliation; other factors being equal those with little formal education are more likely to accept conventional Christian beliefs. There is little difference in people's claimed awareness of supernatural forces.

Thus the patterns of church attendance must be traced back to the nature of the churches as institutions and their relationship with different sections of society. This chapter and the following one raise issues for the churches about the way that they seek to give expression to their beliefs and life.

The community in which I live is a very diverse one. Within a few square kilometres reside university professors and pensioners, a proud blue collar community and an equally proud community of young professionals. It is an area that is many things to many people. The needs, values and interests of the different groups do not always coincide and there is often an undercurrent of prejudice, resentment or suspicion of people from backgrounds that are somehow different.

The churches in our neighbourhood have found that they have related more explicitly to one group or other. In general those from the Housing Department estate which makes up a quarter of the population have tended not to attend any churches. The churches have been seen as being 'outside' agencies important at key moments such as births, deaths or marriages, but otherwise as essentially irrelevant or as institutions to be held in suspicion. The image of the church in the eyes of the community might surprise many regular church attenders. Many see the church as only being for the well to do and not acting in their interests. The church had been a major landlord in the area; many did not realise that the churches were not paid for by the government! Culturally, church attenders in the area seemed quite different — dressed differently, spoke differently, acted differently.

Religion and Class

Historically, the social role of religion has been a pivotal aspect of a great many societies and has attracted a great deal of scrutiny. It has often shaped many other areas of life and the social relations within a culture or community.

In a similar way a great deal of reflection has occurred on the role of class and social stratification within society. It is of little surprise then that the relationship between religion and social class has been examined from a range of perspectives. For Karl Marx (1843) religion was the 'opiate of the masses'. Max Weber (1930), in tracing within Calvinist theology the elements which contributed significantly to the 'spirit of capitalism', suggested religion provided a motor rather than a safeguard in the processes of capitalism. Likewise, Elie Halevy (1924) suggests that Methodism and the evangelical revival, focusing as they did on life after death, when applied to victims of the Industrial Revolution served to draw attention away from earthly issues and act as a tool of social control. He argues that within this process are many of the reasons why in England the period was marked by relative stability rather than insurrection. Of course all of these are highly controversial propositions and presented here in an overly simplistic way. Yet they all draw our attention to the relationship between religion, class structure and social relations.

RESEARCH INTO THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF CHURCH ATTENDERS

A great many studies have been carried out over the past thirty years into the social composition of church attenders. Various studies in Britain showed up a

positive correlation between church attendance and socio-economic factors (e g Argyle and Beit Hallahmi 1975, 161) In the book *Western Religion*, edited by Hans Mol, various writers dealing with different countries have noted a positive relationship between attendance and socio economic status These include many European countries, both Protestant and Catholic (Mol 1974) Sabino Acquaviva quotes studies in France and Germany to provide further support (Acquaviva 1979, 162).

Work on the *American* context provides some interesting comparisons In a nation created in hope by religious pilgrims there are significant differences in the framework into which the churches fit Most writers on the American situation have suggested that church attendance generally increased with increasing social status. Glock, Ringer and Babbie claim that even before rigorous empirical data were collected, working class Americans were believed to be largely indifferent or hostile to religion (1967, 75) The community studies of the 1930s and subsequently have tended to confirm such a pattern. Gerhard Lenski's pioneering work in Detroit (1963) and Bernard Lazerwitz's national sample (1957, 306) also suggest such a relationship Interestingly, whilst Lazerwitz found significant relationships between attendance and occupation and education, he found little relationship with income (1957, 308). More recently Beeghley, Van Velsor and Bock (1981, 403) have suggested that lower-socio-economic status whites are least likely to participate in organised religion. Having looked at a range of research, N J Demerath suggests that, based on indicators of church membership, attendance and involvement in other formal activities, persons of higher status are likely to be more religious He notes some suggestion of a drop off in attendance rates amongst those of very high social status However the pattern is not as clear, he claims, with other indicators of religion such as beliefs (1965, 5) Some studies such as that by Lenski have suggested those of lower socio economic status were more likely to hold traditional religious beliefs.

In all the overseas studies cited so far those of higher socio-economic status are more likely to attend church regularly There are however many social contexts where this is not true In various South American countries, for instance, the churches are very strong amongst the poor In some Eastern European coutries particularly where church attendance is not encouraged by the state it has been suggested that attendance is largely amongst those of lower status (e g Mol 1970) Some studies in the USA (e g. Beeghley, Van Velsor and Bock, 1981) have argued that church attendance amongst blacks does not follow the general pattern and that in some denominations, attendance is high in black churches in lower socio economic areas. One clear difference between church life in the USA and Australia is the vitality of black and Hispanic churches in the inner urban areas of American cities The colour and variety of such churches is largely absent from church life in inner urban and lower socio-economic status areas of Australian cities

Research in Australia

It is extremely common to hear church planners and clergy speak of the church as being 'largely middle class', meaning that the churches do best in more well to do suburban areas and that attenders are disproportionately from higher status backgrounds. There has been remarkably little research to test such a picture. What research there has been has produced confusing conclusions.

Two Australian studies have suggested that church attendance is highest amongst those of higher socio-economic status. In his work on some Protestant churches in South Australia, John Bodicomb notes that profes sional, technical and related occupations were over represented four-fold

> The facts are unmistakable. They reinforce the results from other studies (as well as what most of us already realize): the church is a predominantly middle-class community, drawing few of its members from the so-called 'working classes' (Bodicomb 1978, 18).

In 1978 the Baptist Union of Victoria produced data on the Baptist church in Melbourne in 'The Western Suburbs Conference Report'. It suggests that the Baptist church is far stronger in the higher status suburbs of eastern Melbourne than in the western metropolitan area and that Baptist attenders were largely middle class (Langmead, 1978).

The conclusions of Hans Mol in 'Religion in Australia' have rather confused the above picture and it is to his study that we now turn.

The 'Religion in Australia' Survey

Mol carried out analyses of occupational and educational fluctuations in attendance rates. In general he noted increasing attendance amongst those of higher socio economic status. However he concludes from the survey that they have relatively little impact on church attendance.

The variations outlined in table 10.1 show variations of fifteen to twenty percentage points and over between some of the occupational categories. For the non Catholic churches the variations in attendance due to occupa tional status are of the same order of magnitude or greater than the atten dance rate differences between denominations (see appendix 4).

The 'Religion in Australia' survey came up with some other pertinent results. More Protestant respondents from lower occupational groups report having had an experience of God's presence than go to church regularly (Mol 1971, 91). On the other hand, more Presbyterian professionals and Catholics in general attend church regularly than have an experience of God's presence (1971, 91). Wide denominational and occupational differ ences are evident.

By contrast, Mol's data on prayer and belief in God reveal less variation by occupation He does not, however, provide a denominational breakdown

The 'Religion in Australia' survey appears to provide a wealth of data on occupational differences in responses to a range of religious questions. On educational differences, Mol notes some variations although they are smaller magnitude than those for occupation.

Table 10.1 Percentage of Regular Church-Goers by Occupation and Denomination — The 'Religion in Australia' Survey (1969)

Denomination	*Graziers & farmers*	*Professionals (doctors, architects, etc.) and managers*	*Lower-professionals (teachers, etc.) & clerical workers*	*Manual workers, police force, armed services & shop-owners*	*Total of those in workforce*
Anglicans	26%	12%	26%	11%	15%
Catholics	83%	78%	77%	58%	66%
Methodists	43%	22%	46%	25%	30%
Presbyterians	38%	36%	35%	19%	28%
Others	59%	23%	46%	29%	33%
TOTAL	48%	30%	45%	28%	33%

Source Mol 1971, 89

Yet Mol would seem to be underestimating their value when his main conclusion is to underline the fact that church going differences between denominations were greater than the occupational differences (1971, 93) and to suggest that socio economic differences are essentially insubstantial

> In all these indicators of class there are differences in denominational distribution, but they are relatively small and there is evidence that they are diminishing. This also applies to church going, praying, religious beliefs and experiences (Mol 1971, 110).

Thus research into religion and socio economic status in Australia has presented a rather confused picture It can be further complicated by Michael Hogan s research (1979) which suggests that those of lower socio-economic status are less likely to claim no religious affiliation than those of higher status.

On this note let us turn to the 'Who Goes Where?' study to investigate the impact of socio economic status on church attendance and seek to unravel some of these issues.

THE 'WHO GOES WHERE?' STUDY

As we found in part 2 of this study, the socio economic characteristics of an area are an extremely important aspect of understanding likely church attendance rates, particularly in urban areas The nominal adherents of all the major denominations are much more likely to attend church if they live in a higher socio-economic status area.

Both the main surveys used in the 'Who Goes Where?' study asked a range of questions canvassing aspects of socio-economic status Included were questions regarding occupation, education and income.

Church Attendance and Occupation

The starting point for us is the occupational information The results from the McNair Anderson survey are given in table 10 2 Those in professional occupations tend to have the highest attendance rates In general, attendance rates decrease with decreasing occupational status Two points must be noted, however First there is an increase in attendance rates amongst those in unskilled occupations for all except Uniting church adherents and is most marked amongst Anglicans Secondly attendance rates amongst executives and senior management is much lower than might be expected given their occupational status Once again, the exception to this pattern are Anglican managers and executives whose attendance rates are as high as those for professionals.

Respondents to the McNair Anderson survey were also asked for the occupation of the main income earner in the household. This can provide a measure of the social status of the family unit to which one belongs The results are also in table 10 2 Once again, members of professional families are the highest attenders Although there are some variations between denominations, within each denominational grouping the attendance by professional families is about twice that of the lowest attending occupational category

Parallel data from the AVSS provides a similar picture The variations in the categories used have made direct comparison difficult so we have not presented the results here.

The occupational categories have also been grouped in pairs and recoded as 'upper , middle' and 'lower' to provide a simple index of occupational status The results both for a person's own occupation and that of the main income earner are shown in figure 10.3. In each case there is a strong correlation between attendance and occupational status The pattern is most marked for the Uniting and Catholic churches.

The effect of occupation on church attendance in surveys over the last twenty-five years was examined although not presented here Whilst there are discrepencies in the categories it is evident that throughout the period since the mid 1960s those of higher socio economic status have been better attenders. It is possible that the differences were greater in earlier periods of Australia's history, a point to which we shall return in the following chapter

Table 10.2 Church Attendance and Occupation (1983/84)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly

	Profess-ional	*Senior Manage-ment*	*Clerical*	*Technical/ skilled*	*Semi-skilled*	*Un-skilled*
A. Own Occupation						
Total Population	31%	26%	24%	19%	17%	23%
Anglican	19%	20%	15%	8%	4%	14%
Catholic	57%	45%	42%	34%	26%	37%
Uniting/ Methodist/ Presbyterian	42%	27%	14%	18%	16%	11%
B. Occupation of Main Income Earner						
Total Population	33%	30%	26%	23%	19%	23%
Anglican	18%	20%	18%	12%	7%	14%
Catholic	59%	53%	48%	39%	31%	38%
Uniting/ Methodist/ Presbyterian	40%	28%	18%	16%	14%	10%

Source McNair Anderson

Church Attendance and Level of Education

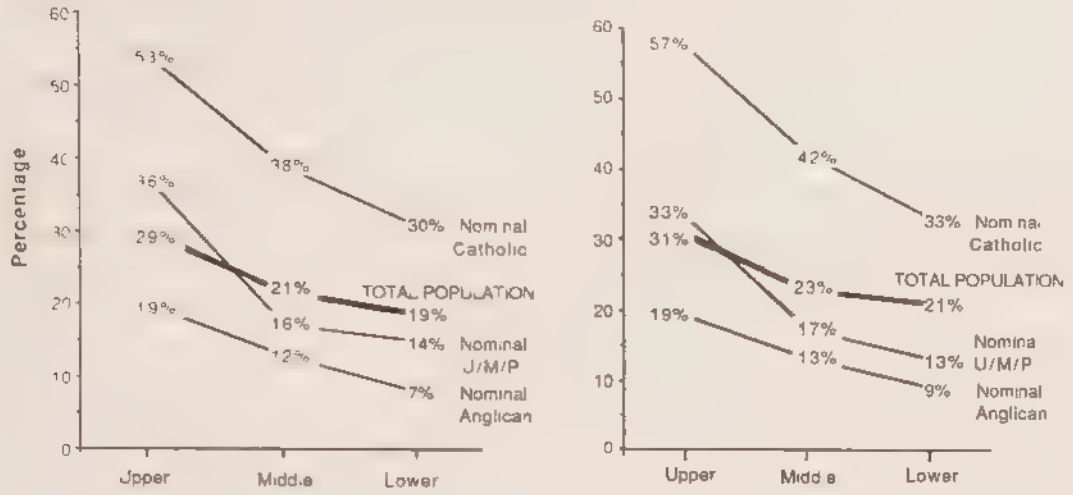
There is a positive relationship between church attendance and level of education reached. The results are shown in figure 10.4. Those with university degrees or some form of tertiary education are more likely to be regular attenders. As with occupation there is a slight increase in regular attendance amongst those with the least education.

Analysis of church attendance by income does not reveal fluctuations of the same magnitude as, say, those for occupation. This question is perhaps the one most sensitive to distortion in the survey process. Several researchers have suggested that income levels from surveys are a bad guide to social status (e.g. Daniel 1983, 13).

These results suggest a clear and statistically significant relationship between church attendance and socio economic status. Those of higher socio-economic status, whether that is measured by occupation or education, are the most likely to be regular attenders. The other facet of these results is a small upturn in likely attendance rates amongst the lowest socio economic status groups.

Figure 10.3 Church Attendance and Occupational Status (1983/84)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source McNair Anderson

These results could not be explained by the effects of other variables in the study. The multivariate analysis carried out on the various data sets (see appendices 2 and 3) suggested that they were of importance even after adjustments had been made for the effects of all other variables.

Those Claiming No Religious Affiliation

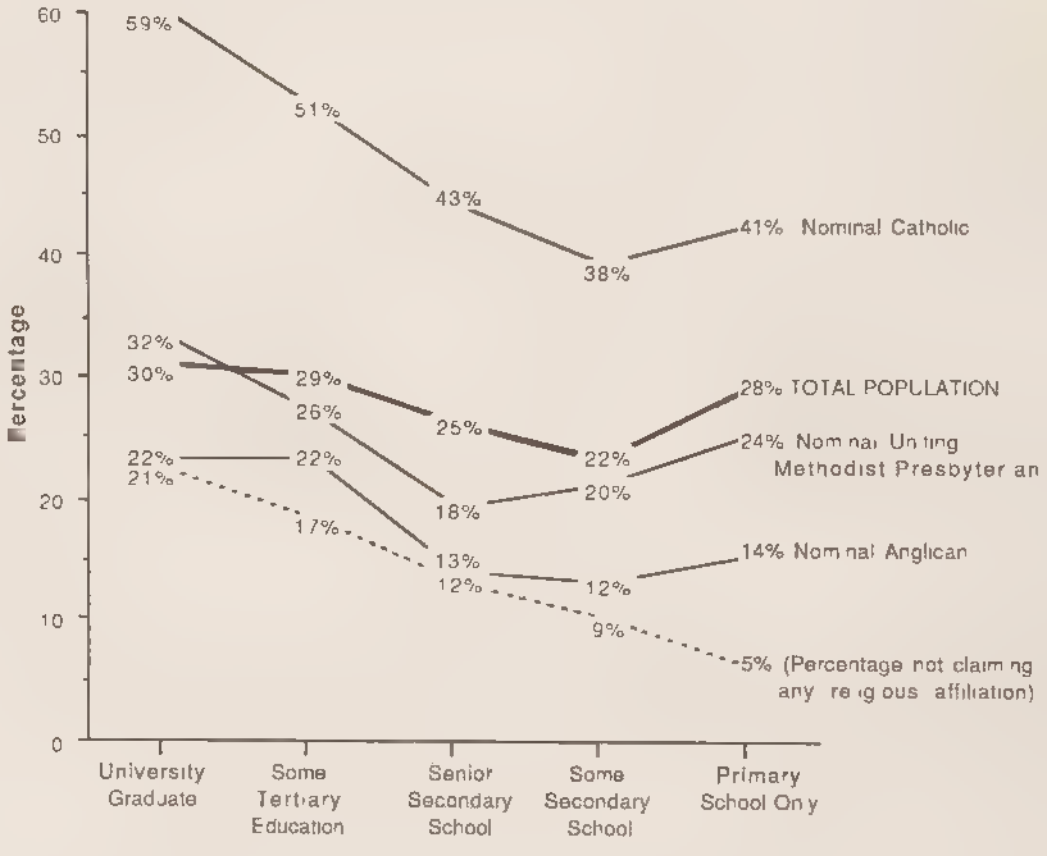
If the patterns of regular church attendance are distinct, the relationship between socio economic status and those claiming no religious affiliation at all are equally distinct. The surveys showed clearly that the percentage claiming no religious affiliation at all rose steadily with increasing levels of education: in the McNair Anderson survey, 21 per cent of university graduates did so compared to only 5 per cent of those with only a primary school education. Similar patterns emerged with income and occupation. High levels of thought out irreligion were far more likely to be amongst professionals and high income earners.

Other Aspects of Religious Orientation

How do the patterns of attendance we have described compare with other aspects of religious orientation? Examination of the AVSS data shows that occupational status differences in religious orientation are, in the main, restricted to the area of religious practices. The AVSS suggests less significant

Figure 10.4 Church Attendance and Level of Education (1983/84)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source McNair Anderson

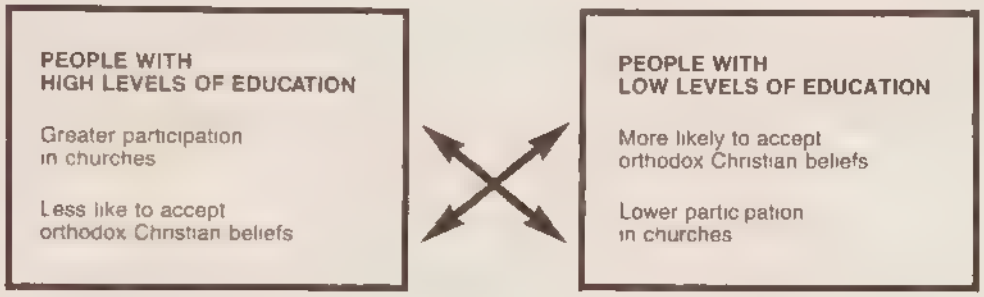
relationships between occupation and general religious orientation, experience of the supernatural, orthodoxy of beliefs or the relevance of the Ten Commandments. Occupational status effects largely reflect on involvement in the churches as institutions. Those in less skilled occupations cannot be classified as less religious by many of the other measures.

It is a similar story with variations based on education. Although not tabulated here, the AVSS data suggests that the only other areas where education has an influence is in the area of beliefs and the relevance of the Ten Commandments. In these cases the pattern is somewhat unclear.

We can creatively further explore the effect of education by using a range of multivariate statistical techniques and separating out the effects of education from those of other factors (age, gender and so on). Are there likely to be any differences in the religious orientation of two people, identical in all

respects but having reached different levels of education? This has been investigated using a discriminant function and model reduction procedure and is described in appendix 2. The results are shown diagrammatically in figure 10.5.

Figure 10.5 The Effect of Education on the Shape of Religious Orientation (1983)



*ucation after the effects of all other variables have been taken

All other factors being equal increasing education is likely to increase participation in the churches. At the same time it is likely to erode orthodox Christian beliefs and perceptions of the relevance of the Ten Commandments. Those with little education are less likely to participate in church life but more likely to hold to orthodox Christian beliefs.

The impact of education after all other effects have been taken into account is quite striking. It is a result inviting more rigorous testing. Although not dealt with here, the above patterns were replicated in a subsequent analysis of another sample. They can perhaps be best explained in the following way. Education can result in a widening of perspectives which, in turn, may make traditional religious beliefs more difficult to accept uncritically. At the same time, however, education tends to raise a person's social status which, as we have seen, is likely to place that person in a community where church attendance is more socially acceptable (Roof 1976, 199).

CONCLUSIONS

These results yield important insights that can be used to provide a framework for efforts to start to understand the relationship between religion and socio economic status in Australia. In part 1 we saw that the socio-economic predictors were some of the most powerful for predicting church attendance

rates of nominal adherents from all of the mainline churches, and that church attendance was highest in high status areas. At the same time, we saw that those not claiming affiliation to any religion also tended to come from higher status areas.

This chapter suggests that a distinction must be drawn between institutional involvement and other aspects of religious experience. The effect of socio economic status is largely limited to the area of institutional involvement. Those of higher socio economic status, particularly university graduates or those in professional occupations, are more likely to be regular church attenders than others in the community. This should not, however, be taken to mean that those of lower socio-economic status are less religious, if that is measured in ways other than church involvement. Indeed there are indications in this study that the effect of increasing levels of education has been to reduce conventional Christian beliefs as we have seen in the previous section. This is further underlined by the analysis of persons claiming no religious affiliation at all.

The differences in church attendance related to socio-economic status must therefore be explained by an analysis of church life itself. *Explanations for the patterns of church attendance found in both survey and church data must be looked for in examining the nature of organisational participation on one hand and the relationship between the churches and different segments of Australian society on the other.*

This is a task to which we shall turn in the next chapter.

11

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS — TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

The patterns of church attendance, outlined in the previous chapter, are not new but reflect a long term trend in Australian and British church life. Particularly within Anglican and Protestant traditions, the working class have seen the churches as representing interests other than their own. The orientation of the churches, their doctrines, relationships with the state and the establishment, and the social background of members and clergy have all reinforced such attitudes.

Further, an analysis of the involvement in formal institutions of different social groups suggests that such organisations tend to attract people with higher levels of education, more verbal skills and of higher socio-economic status. Thus it can be suggested that the nature of church life serves to reinforce the current patterns of attendance. For the churches to move beyond the patterns will require, at the very least, a willingness to encourage new models of involvement that go beyond the structure of formal organisations.

In the previous chapter socio economic status was seen to have an impact on likely levels of church attendance for all mainline denominations.

In other aspects of religious orientation the relationship with socio-economic status revealed more complexity. We suggested that increasing socio-economic status, based on occupational and educational background, was likely to increase church participation but erode orthodoxy of beliefs.

To speak of such patterns is of only relative value unless one can start to *provide explanations* for them and *derive implications* for the churches.

In chapter 4 a framework was suggested for understanding the patterns of church attendance at a local level. A range of factors were summarized, some related to the social context for ministry and others to church life. One factor mentioned there was the social make up of a denomination's constituency. A range of writers have observed that most churches have sprung up from within a particular sub group of a society. Weber (1946) noted that different world religions emerged from amongst different classes of people. Richard Niebuhr (1965) applied the concept of a religion relating to a specific social group to the local church level and felt that different churches tend to attract particular social groupings from within their community. The Church Growth move ment talks of a 'homogeneous unit principle' whereby churches are more likely to grow if they are culturally monochrome (McGavran, 1970). Drawing on such work, Currie, Gilbert and Horsley (1977) talk of an 'external constituency' of people culturally disposed to identifying with a particular denomination. In terms of John Bodicomb s model presented in chapter 2, this represents those people in the 'Common' around church life.

Such constituencies can be ethnic in origin, as was Catholicism in Australia with its Irish background. Alternatively they might be regional or socio economic. Methodism in Britain, for instance, began from amongst the working class and reflected certain regional groups. On the global scene today many sects and Pentecostal churches have grown from amongst the less educated and the poor, as have some of the 'base Christian communities' of the Catholic church in South America.

Coming from such culturally specific locations, denominations and churches will come to reflect the cultural values and orientations of their dominant membership. In turn this will affect their doctrines and theological orientations, another important factor in church life presented in the model in chapter 4.

Of course the character of the wider constituency of a denomination may change over time. The ethnic character is likely to change only slowly, the socio economic character of a constituency may change far more dramatically. The Church Growth movement talks of this as 'upward lift', a natural tendency for regular attenders at church to become upwardly mobile as a result of their beliefs and changes in priorities.

In this chapter it is suggested that the variations in attendance due to socio-economic status can be explained in two ways. *First, the historical orientation of mainline churches has tended to be towards those of higher social status and their values and interests. This has meant that church*

attendance is selectively attractive to different social groups within the society. Secondly, the way the churches organise and express themselves today is likely to be more attractive to those with higher social status and greater levels of education.

To this end this chapter is divided into two parts. The first is a review of historical literature on the relationship between the churches and the working class. The second part looks at the nature of formal institutions and participation in them.

THE CHURCHES AND THE WORKING CLASS IN AUSTRALIA — AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

So we move from a demographic perspective to an historical one to understand better the patterns of church attendance. In so doing the questions that concern us are:

- How long have the present patterns of attendance existed?
- When and how did they originate?
- How have the churches in their actions served to reinforce them?

These are very involved and complex issues and there is much that could be said. Of necessity the comments that follow are brief and very general. For a fuller treatment readers are referred to *A Gulf Too Deep?* (Kaldor 1983) and the references cited in the text.

One problem in understanding this historical material is that many sources are rather imprecise in what they mean by terms such as working class, the working classes, the industrial masses, the poor, urban workers and so on. It is important to recognise this limitation in what follows.

Australian religious life has always drawn from that in Great Britain and Ireland and so it is to them that we must turn to provide a backdrop for the Australian experience. It is Protestantism that was the dominant religious force at the formation of this country and so it is to the British religious context that we turn first.

The British Backdrop

Many historical sources speak of the estrangement of the urban working class from established forms of Protestant religion. The Protestant church in Victorian England contained a fairly strong class bias. Engels wrote in 1845 'All the writers of the bourgeoisie are unanimous on this point, that the workers are not religious, and do not attend church' (1845, 93). The census of 1851, which asked questions about religious worship, commented that most of those not attending church belonged to the working class population. 'These are never or but seldom seen in our religious congregations' (Inglis 1963, 1). By and large the non-conformist churches experienced the same patterns as the Church of England.

It is often suggested that the Methodist church was a working-class church. Among the first generation of Methodists many were working class, and perhaps the Primitive Methodist sect kept its working class affiliations longer than the mainstream Methodists (Sheppard 1974, 129). Even in Wesley's own lifetime, however, there were signs that Methodist societies were becoming predominantly middle class and this became more obvious as time went on. Wesley himself noted this trend to 'upward lift'. There is a note of concern in his analysis of what was happening to his movement:

> I do not see how it is possible in the nature of things for any revival of religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase so will pride, anger and love of the world . . . So although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this? (Niebuhr 1965, 70).

It is clear that, back at least to the Industrial Revolution, it is not that the churches 'lost' the urban working class but rather that they never had them. In the burgeoning cities and industrial centres created by the social and technological changes of the Industrial Revolution the churches never had a strong presence amongst the workers and the poor.

Some of the feelings of the masses trapped in the growing cities are recorded by missionaries such as those from the London City Mission:

> 'You don't have to go to church, do you? I mean you can live a decent life without all that rigmarole, can't you? Strikes me that half the people who go to church are humbugs anyway, Sunday Christians.' She smiled. 'When I get to the pearly gates He won't hold it against me, I am sure of that. And if He does, I'll tell Him straight. I was too busy on Sundays getting dinner and tea for you bloody lot to have time to sit on my arse in church!'
>
> 22 Popham Road. Had conversation with person here upon subject of closing business on Sundays. She did not see her way clear to do so she said. Sundays they did more than other days and she thought there was no harm in trying to put by a little for the future. I spoke of the realm of the soul and how unwise to neglect for the sake of earthly gain.
>
> 'We felt sure that there was a God but that He was no friend of ours . . . it behoved us to sharpen our wits and fight the world for what we could get' (McLeod 1974, 50).

It is certainly also true that the churches in their social composition, attitudes and actions served to exacerbate this situation. The church, and most of its active adherents, were blinkered in their views of society, representing in their attitudes and actions the interests of other parts of the social order. They misunderstood working class culture, condemning many of their support systems and values, expressing their Christian faith within the cultural package of

respectability. This situation may have been furthered by the existence of pew renting whereby people paid to sit in certain pews, the more prestigious pews costing more money. Those not able to afford such a rental would have to sit at the back. This resulted in class segregation within a congregation and no doubt tended to keep the working class away.

The poor church attendance of the working class cannot be attributed to a lack of effort on the part of the churches. Particularly during the latter part of the nineteenth century there was a great deal of effort to reach the masses in the bulging urban centres. Many of our current church institutions and landmarks had their origins as attempts to bridge the gulf with the urban working class: non-denominational missions, Salvation Army, Central Methodist Missions, many of our charitable institutions.

The missionaries to the urban poor were horrified by everything that they saw, as were missionaries to other cultures in foreign lands. They disliked every aspect of working class life and tried to change everything, 'educating' the working class into acceptance of middle class cultural values. 'They were unable to separate working class values from the evil consequences of an appalling environment and economic hardship' (Norman 1976, 165).

For their part the working class and the poor in the expanding cities were prepared to accept assistance that was offered. That did not, however, translate into church attendance. The work of such Christian missions was very much a case of welfare at a distance.

Moreover the church in its connections with secular authority sought to preserve the status quo. The social order was seen by the church as divinely ordained and clergy often also acted as magistrates reinforcing and administering secular authority. Apart from a sense of patronising concern, there was little real evaluation and assessment of the social order and social structures, creating inequality and spawning crime.

In Britain the role of the clergy as magistrates was also augmented by the use of religion in the legitimising and solemnising of punishment. Clergy were present at the carrying out of death penalties, participating in the official proceedings.

It is little wonder then that active church adherence was a phenomenon closely related to socio-economic status and class. Generally the churches saw part of their role as producing social harmony between people and between classes. Bowen (1965) suggests that many churchmen looked back to an imaginary and ideal time when squire and parson had kept the poor in a state of social contentment. They hoped that their work would help to knit the wounds between classes created by the Industrial Revolution and return the social order to its 'natural' ordering.

The vision of the emerging working class was quite different. According to Alan Gilbert that vision evolved in part from a rejection of the old social structures in which the established churches formed no small part. 'Rejecting the squire usually meant rejecting the parson as well, especially because so many parsons of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries combined the roles of landowner and magistrate with their pastoral duties. Thus both the

idea and the reality of the State Church gave the 'birth of class' an essentially counter-religious significance' (Gilbert 1980, 88).

The nature of social class in Great Britain is quite different from that in Australia However, it does form the backdrop to early Australian experience. The relationship between the churches and the social order in Britain is instructive for us, particularly given the efforts of the Australian churches to model themselves on their British counterparts.

An understanding of the basic tensions between the English and the Irish, discussed in chapter 2, is also important to understanding early Australian religious life. Such antagonism was to be transported to Australia and to become a central theme in Australian religious life and in class relations in this country

The Churches in the New Land

Historical sources suggest that the Protestant churches in Australia have always been organisations of the well-to-do White settlement in Australia struggled through its infancy, developed to maturity and grew into nationhood with a Protestant church tradition that never really included the working class

The attitudes of the working class to the churches in Britain were transported to Australia in 1788 both in the convicts and in the hierarchy of the new penal colony The role of the church in social control and as a moral policeman was, if anything, thrown into even greater relief (Grocott 1980)

If anti church and anti-clerical attitudes were imported from Britain, there was certainly much in nineteenth century Australian church life that served to reinforce and exacerbate them The attitudes and class background of clergymen and congregations, clergy participation in the judicial system, the existence of pew-renting, the emphasis on wowserism, temperance and repressive moral codes, the paternalism and judgmental attitudes attached to much evangelistic and welfare work, the instinctive support for the status quo and antipathy to the aspirations of the labour movement are all part of a rather long list of ways in which the gulf between church and working class was made deeper.

The task facing the earliest Church of England chaplains in the penal colony was described in an earlier chapter Catholicism faced quite different struggles The first mass was celebrated in Sydney in 1803 by an Irish convict priest It was allowed on condition that it not be an occasion for 'seditious conversation'(O'Farrell 1968,1).

Within a year permission for Catholic worship was withdrawn and it was not until 1820 that it could be publicly celebrated again In Australia, as back at home, the Irish convicts looked to their religion for a sense of self worth and identity in a hostile society Religious differences, alongside many social differences, marked the Irish convicts off from the Protestant majority

Unlike its Protestant counterparts, the Catholic church in Australia began from below, as a response to the needs and desires of the convicts Unlike the Protestant's establishment emphasis, Catholicism was anti establishment Over time this was to change as the various denominations battled to gain a re-

cognised status in an emerging colony By the 1830s it had achieved a position of nominal religious equality (Murtagh 1969,33).

It nevertheless meant that Catholicism represented a quite different orientation to its Protestant counterparts It became, according to O'Farrell, a focus for Irish struggles for acceptance Even if they were insignificant as individuals, together they could produce a mighty church.

By mid century, patterns of Protestant church attendance like those in Britain had been well and truly established here In 1857 an Anglican statement commented:

> We often ask ourselves the question: How do the working classes of this Colony spend their Sunday? Their attendance at our various places of worship is but scanty, nor do we believe they muster in much greater numbers around the banner of other denominations . . . Where this sacred day is disregarded there is every reason to fear for a country's welfare (Woolmington 1976).

Such patterns were not for lack of trying, as was noted in the *Spectator* in 1883·

> Never was there such a time when so many agencies were at work and so much energy expended on behalf of the falling and fallen as now; yet in spite of all, the class who are godless, who never attend divine worship, who, in fact, are practical heathens in our midst, is increasing rather than lessening (Howe 1972, 104).

A Baptist in Melbourne in 1921 commented that:

> In the inner urban areas . . . churches are fighting to keep doors open. For where we should be strong we are weak; where the greatest demand is made on the church and minister, on his purse and his personality, on his heart and in his health, we as a denomination often leave this cause severely alone, except in the matter of criticism and in our union of churches is a deplorable anomaly in these matters — leaving the weak to grow weaker (Marchant 1981).

There is little in the way of historical records regarding Catholic mass attendance in the nineteenth century The Catholic population was certainly of lower social status than its Protestant counterparts

As in Britain the churches mounted many efforts in the latter nineteenth century to reach the poor and the working class in Australian cities Again, as in Britain, these efforts were often couched within a welfare role and tinged with a paternalistic orientation.

By the second half of the century as self government came to the various states in Australia, broader issues of social reform came to create new divisions between privilege and advocates of various democratic and radical move-

ments The Catholic church had supported and provided leadership to democratic movements on the goldfields Catholic immigrants tended to be landless Irish whose interests were clearly not those of the Australian establishment. Catholicism lent support to emerging unionism.

The rise of organised labour as a force in society was perhaps the most significant development in Australian life at the turn of the century It was a period of changing political alignments and bitter struggles between capital and labour The new realities of bank crashes, economic gloom, unemployment and strikes were something for which the churches were unprepared

Whilst there was support from various segments of the Protestant churches for the labour movement, in general their attitudes and the social background of opinion formers (mainly clergy) meant that churches kept their distance

For its part the Catholic church firmly supported the movement Cardinal Moran supported the labour cause during the Great Strike of 1890 This support was of importance as it stood in contrast to the attitudes of churchmen from non-Catholic denominations.

Protestant-Catholic distrust was to separate the Protestant churches even further from the movements of reform The growing involvement of Catholics with the Labor Party was seen by Protestants as an indication of a coming attack on 'Protestant Australia' (Bollen 1972, 138).

Thus this process saw the firming of connections of the Protestant churches with the conservative forces in society. The rise of the labour movement caused a realignment of social, political and economic forces in Australian life, a pivotal point in this country's development A class that had previously been numerous but relatively powerless came to wield more influence and took on new significance as the new nation forged its identity It was precisely the class with which the Protestant church had had least effective contact and influence.

Within the labour movement there were increasing strains of thought that were anti religious in tone, linking the overthrow of the old religion with the overthrow of the old social order The labour movement increasingly saw itself in a way as a new kind of religion 'It is a religion in itself if we but understand it rightly' commented a labour paper in mid 1891, and we are understanding it more and more every day' (Raynor 1962, 410)

It is true that in Australia by the mid nineteenth century there was no official church of the state as in Britain Yet this difference in legal position should not be construed as suggesting major differences in attitude on the part of the churches concerned The churches in the maturing colonies of Australia by and large saw a role of supporting the state, the situation in Australia grew out of the need to accommodate several religious traditions all with a heritage of being an 'officially endorsed' religion.

In an emerging nation, there developed an Australian spirit, traditions and mythology It captured the love of the underdog, the freedom of the open spaces and the nitty gritty of ordinary people An Australian culture was developing, little related to the churches The Protestant churches represent

ed an older tradition, alien to the working class, quite distant from this emerging culture.

Historical analysis such as that we have touched on here, provides a powerful backdrop to an understanding of the current patterns of Protestant church attendance It starts to unlock for us some of the many aspects of what is a very complex phenomenon.

The historical reasons for the current Catholic mass attendance patterns are less clear In this study we have found that Catholics of higher social status are more likely to be regular attenders Historical data are very sketchy There is little evidence available from observers during the last century It would seem that the Catholic church during the twentieth century presents a picture of a denomination in transition Catholics were beginning to diversify, both in ethnic origin and social status In the 1920s falling mass attendance was a subject of concern It appeared workers to whom communism appealed were falling away as well as some intellectuals (O'Farrell 1968, 255).

Support for the Labor Party was accompanied by fears of communism, fears that were to grow as the century progressed By the 1950s concerns were great enough to shatter the long standing Catholic commitment to the Labor Party and to split that party in two.

O'Farrell suggests that the split highlights the changes in the social composition of the Catholic church It had ceased to be a group at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder Catholics had been upwardly mobile and occupied positions on all rungs of the occupational ladder (1968, 272) It is possible that in this process increasing respectability and orientation may have generated the patterns of mass attendance found in the last chapter

* * *

In his assessment of the impact of social status on religious practices Mol reflects on historical sources and suggests that they are overstated reflecting a middle class distrust of working class values and lifestyles (1971, 94) It is possible that historical sources and church observers may tend to dramatise the situation That is something very difficult to judge from a vantage point many years removed from the eras in question It is quite likely that there was a middle class distrust of the lifestyle and values of the working class Yet this presupposes a strong link between church and middle class values in the first place and therefore also non involvement in church life of the working class in a way that is more significant and substantial than that of people in general Given the picture presented in this section it is not surprising that we find the patterns of church involvement that we do The cost of seeking to achieve or maintain 'establishment' status has been a lopsided distribution of membership.

Historian E R Norman makes the following comment on church growth and decline in Britain over the last two hundred years:

> Over a perspective of two centuries it can be seen that institutional Christianity in England underwent a modest boom

> in the first half of the nineteenth century — modest in numerical terms, but hugely important in terms of influence. It represented the adhesion of the middle classes, and most of the intelligentsia, to Christianity, as the vehicle of their moral seriousness. It was a middle-class boom . . . The working classes were only indirectly affected by all this. They still did not go to church, and it was the slow erosion of the middle-class membership, not the disappearance of the working classes from church, that has led to modern attendance figures . . . (1976, 10).

If Norman is right, the changing fortunes of the churches over the last two hundred years reflect two separate issues On the one hand it is the result of the decline of middle-class adherence due to a variety of factors On the other hand it reflects the continued non involvement of the working class in established forms of religious practice This is a thesis also put forward by Mol (1971, 94).

Alan Gilbert suggests a possible connection between long term working class non attendance and twentieth-century middle-class decline Speaking of Britain he argues that various cultural forces have emerged to serve and shape the interests of all classes. The media, especially television, provides an obvious example of such forces So do major sporting traditions And so do certain of the values, expectations and assumptions implicit in the language and objectives of modern consumer advertising

In this way, popular culture comes to reflect market forces and purchasing power. According to Gilbert, until this century working-class culture was marginal to national life In this century however, working class culture has affected popular consciousness (1980, 91) If Gilbert is correct, and his ideas applicable in Australia, then it is possible that some of the attitudes and ideas of a group well-distanced from the churches may have been infused into the wider society as the century has progressed.

THE CHURCHES AS FORMAL INSTITUTIONS

So we move now from a historical orientation to focus again on the contemporary church scene It was suggested in a previous chapter that the churches could be looked upon as one of the most common forms of local associations A piece of research highlighted then was the work of Janowitz and Kasarda (1974). They found that one of the key determinants of participation in a local association was socio-economic status.

Various pieces of research suggest that in this respect church attendance patterns are quite similar to patterns of involvement in a range of other organisations Various community studies have suggested that those of lower status do not attend church as regularly as people from other backgrounds and that this is also true for participation in other local associations Some of the best known is the work of Peter Willmott and Michael Young on various communities in Britain (1963) Demerath has observed similar patterns in the

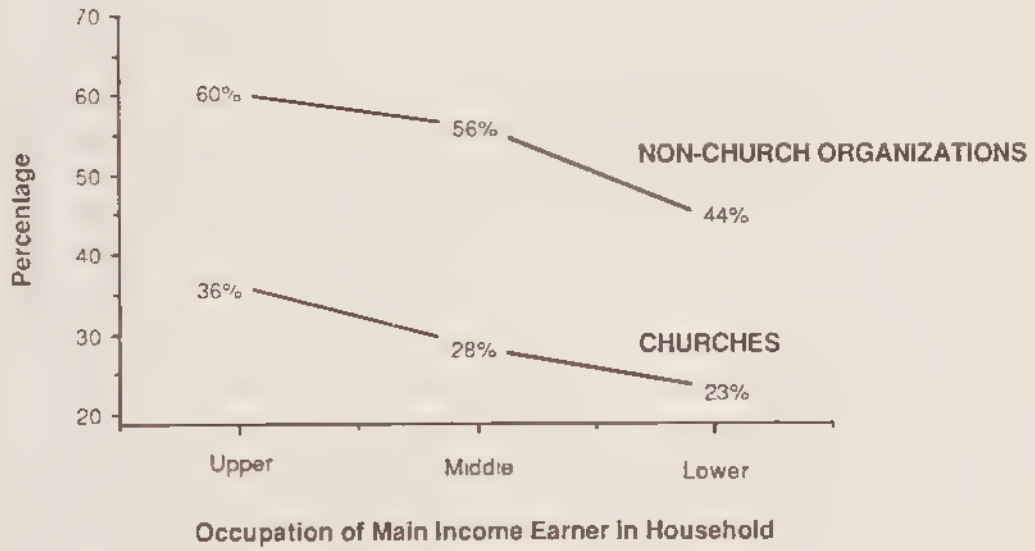
USA (1965, 8) Erich Goode has argued that socio-economic status variations in attendance do not have a religious basis but rather reflect varying degrees of willingness to be involved in organisations (1966, 19).

The AVSS data allow us some insights into patterns in Australia In figure 11 1 we see the effect of occupational status on membership of other organisations The table shows similar patterns for membership of churches and other organisations.

Why should participation in formal organisations be affected by occupational and educational background? There is a range of possibilities suggested by studies of communities and culture.

Figure 11.1 Occupational Status and Membership of Social Organisations (1983)

Percentage of Each Category Who Are Members of Particular Organisations



CLASS, CULTURE AND THE CHURCHES TODAY

Socio-economic status can affect values and codes of behaviour in a great many ways Occupational and educational differences can result, for example, in different levels of access to resources and opportunities The stockbroker will have a much broader horizon of possibilities than does a process-worker At the same time, educational differences are likely to create different ways of looking at life and establishing priorities.

As a means of exploring this further, let us consider some differences between what we shall describe as typical 'white collar' culture and values, and that of typical 'blue collar' communities. It must be underlined again that these are very general caricatures. More precise formulations would require rigorous anthropological research of the type not readily available on the Australian context. As with any generalisations, one can always find exceptions.

Abstract or Concrete Thinking

One of the central aspects of formal educational processes is the training it provides in abstract thinking and the conceptualisation and manipulation of ideas whereas in blue-collar cultures concrete thinking predominates.

A simple illustration in the area of child-rearing may be of use. It has been suggested in various pieces of research (e.g. Douglas 1970) that those with high levels of education are likely to teach their children in terms of *principles of behaviour*. Desires and wants are measured against a set of abstract moral principles. When a child asks a question, the parents are likely to respond with a full explanation, encouraging the child to assess consequences and become sensitive to personal feelings. In such a way verbal skills are likely to be encouraged.

By contrast, in blue-collar communities, there is a much more concrete approach. Behaviour codes are based on continual building up of a sense of social pattern and ascribed role categories. In answer to a question the parent is likely to reply in terms of this role grid: 'Because I said so (hierachy). Because you're a boy (sex role). Because you're the oldest (seniority). In such a way the moral grid is woven into the concrete events of everyday life (Benington 1973, 57).

For those working with abstract principles, it is the motives that give meaning to the act. Amongst concrete thinkers, it is the act that matters. The abstract thinker is freed from a system of rigid positions but made prisoner to a system of feelings and abstract principles (Douglas 1970, 27).

This is not the place to evaluate either approach. What is important is to recognise the differences that do exist in different sections of our community. It is also important to recognise that, *to those unaccustomed to it, the processes of abstract thinking can be very threatening.*

Active involvement in a social organisation does require a range of verbal and conceptual skills. In a study of a new housing estate in Melbourne, Bryson and Thompson comment that it must be recognised that conventional committee work requires such skills which are unlikely to have been acquired by minimally educated blue-collar workers, although such skills are usually taken for granted by those with higher levels of education. Leaders who wish to involve more people in local affairs should, therefore, promote activities of an informal nature, rather than operate through formal committees (1972, 45).

A Canadian, Marjaleena Repo, expresses the problem very neatly in discussing community groups in a neighbourhood of mixed class

> The working class . . . have no training in leadership and verbal skills, are socially insecure and feel inferior when having to deal with and mix with highly literate . . . middle-class elements. They are not able to challenge verbally middle-class people . . . in big or small meetings . . . and feel quite correctly that circles are being talked around their heads . . . When an occasional working-class person gathers courage to get up and say something, it is usually an emotional outburst, which is either totally ignored or paternalistically received. Consequently the meetings that middle-class elements thrive on create boredom, anger and anxiety on the part of working-class participants. After a while they stop attending altogether, and the organisation is now fully in the hands of the middle class elements IN WHOSE INTEREST IT HAS BEEN RUN ALL ALONG (1977, 53)

Much of church life, doctrine and practice involves high levels of abstract thinking and conceptualisation. This is reflected in the contents and methods of church teaching, in the formal structures of church life and decision-making. It is underpinned by the educational levels required by most churches of people desiring to become clergy. It is quite likely that these aspects will tend to reduce the involvement in church life of those with less formal education.

The predominance of abstract thinkers in church life is likely to have had an impact on doctrinal emphases. In some church traditions there is a strong emphasis on the abstract formulations of the faith, in an era when many Australians would be more interested in knowing what difference faith might make in the concrete realities of their lives. David Millikan puts it well from his own experience:

> We believed that you could convince others of the truth of the Christian faith simply by argument. We used to depend on various British heavyweight theologians whose arguments seemed to have the sort of stunning inevitability we were looking for. But we seldom met with success.
>
> Our arguments struck no chords in the souls of our fellows. Their questions were more basic. They had to do with the immediacy of their life — sexual morality, personal certainty, the experience of God and so on . . . (1981, 31).

The churches need abstract formulations of doctrine, just as certainly they need a concrete understanding of how it affects a person's life. Millikan's comments were in fact related to sharing faith with a far from uneducated audience. There are a great many Australians who are concrete thinkers

Individual Versus Corporate Identity

Following from the above distinctions, researchers (e g Hoggart 1957) have suggested that in the white-collar community an emphasis is on the individual, whereas the blue-collar community puts more of a stress on the group This can be seen in differences in the workplace The white-collar worker is usually located within a career structure which is largely vertical in nature Workers may change residence or jobs in order to further their careers. By contrast the blue-collar worker is located in a career structure with limited scope for promotion The same sort of people work together and, particularly in 'one industry' towns or communities, they also live together This can produce a high degree of group loyalty.

Sociologists and researchers have often noted a local solidarity in blue collar communities which divides the world into two categories — 'us' and 'them' Certain people are accepted as part of the 'us' whilst everyone else is seen as alien.

The 'us' are friends, kinship networks, local support systems and indigenous 'gatekeepers', such as power brokers in the local Labor Party branches.

The 'them' are the more impersonal faces of the rest of the world, particularly bureaucracies, government agencies, police and the like Richard Hoggart suggests that this division between 'us' and 'them' is further strengthened by a 'feeling that the world outside is strange and often unhelpful, that it has most of the counters stacked on its side, that to meet it on its own terms is difficult' (1957, 72) The attitude is well illustrated in differing attitudes to the police as authority figures·

> To the middle-classes the policeman symbolises 'help'; while to even the most respectable, law-abiding member of the working-class the police represent 'trouble': reactions vary along a continuum from fearful awe to outright resentment — both extremes suggesting that the police are felt to be alien, in contrast to the general confidence in other sections of the community that the police in some ill-defined way are 'on our side' (Benington 1973, 53).

The role of outside agents in such communities is important In *The Urban Villagers*, Herbert Gans discusses the role of 'external caretakers' such as various welfare professionals Only in special cases does an outsider come to be trusted and accepted There is no reason to suggest that this would be any different for clergy or church people who might seem culturally different

These different emphasis may have an impact on church life in quite another way There is a high degree of doctrinal emphasis in some church traditions on the individual Conversion is seen as totally an individual question and church life essentially a gathering of individuals to worship their God. In the biblical record there are many instances where groups or families 'chose' corporately to become Christian disciples Gatherings of believers were also

seen to be communal events carrying important corporate obligations of mutual support and caring

Whilst it is obviously a contentious notion, it could be argued that the emphasis on the individual and the loss of corporate dimensions in some church traditions is the result of the cultural emphases of theological and doctrinal opinion formers. Such speculation warrants serious reflection, the biblical record would seem to suggest both individual and corporate dimensions are important.

Immediate or Long-Term Concerns

Blue collar culture tends to emphasise immediate issues and concerns, whereas in a white collar area longer-term issues predominate. The higher a person's social status, the greater is his ability to affect his destiny. Those of higher status have therefore more reason to take a long term view. It is no less surprising that lotteries and other games of chance are so popular in lower status areas.

From another perspective, the work of Abraham Maslow (1954) also suggests such a pattern. In his famous model of a hierarchy of needs, he suggests that for any person survival and other basic needs such as sustenance are foremost until they have been adequately and comprehensively met. After that other needs can be dealt with — such as esteem, belonging and self actualisation. On such a basis those who are secure at a basic level are more likely to be able to consider the longer view of life.

It could be argued that in Australia active participation in a church does not constitute a basic survival need. On that basis it would not be surprising that those who were more secure in a worldly sense may be more likely to focus on other worldly issues at times other than crises. Conversly, where there exists a strong church presence amongst those of lower status, it is often also the case that religion is seen to be relevant to the immediate issues of everyday life. The black churches in the United States and churches in South America and the Philippines provide obvious examples whereby religion functions as a support and a rallying point in the face of oppression, helping people cope with existing conditions or working to change those conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen in the last two chapters those with higher levels of education or socio-economic status are more likely to actively participate in the churches, although as we have seen in this study that is not to say they are necessarily more 'religious' if this is measured in terms of beliefs or experiences of the supernatural. Religion can still have obvious relevance, even to those who do not actively participate in its institutions.

For the churches, seeking as they do to give expression to the religious experiences of all sections of the Australian community, these results should raise many questions. They do not reflect a cross section of the Australian life

Those wishing to become more representative will need to respect the cultural differences of those around them. In so doing, they must move beyond the kind of paternalism that has typified much of their historical relationship with the working class

When ministry takes place from a distance it is likely to be hindered by a great range of cultural barriers Consider this illustration A local church outreach organisation in a blue collar community operated for many years. It carried out its role with enthusiasm drawing its workers from a great many churches These workers were usually from quite a different social background, and hoped to increase local participation in churches Over several years they were disappointed with the response When they stopped to listen to those in the community, they discovered that people did not want to go to the churches, despite great respect for those with whom they had been involved, largely because *they didn't feel they were good enough or could be like the other church-goers.*

There are many hidden barriers that can act as powerful influences on the shape of the membership of a local group or organisation Very often church people have not seen or understood them All too often church welfare or outreach initiatives do not respect those with whom they seek to be involved

Various writers have argued that religious revivals have usually developed initially amongst those of lower socio economic status Niebuhr suggests that whenever Christianity has become a religion of the fortunate and grown philosophically abstract and ethically harmless, it becomes irrelevant for those of lower status and the situation is created where the right leader finds little difficulty in launching a new movement (1965, 31).

Whilst Australia has not experienced a great many such movements, Niebuhr's comments highlight the need for churches to seek to maintain a close contact with ordinary people A failure to do that will result in declining participation and disenchantment The growing charismatic movement provides an illustration of the development of a new movement amongst people not powerful in the lives of the churches Some aspects of its growth will be dealt with in the following chapters.

Maintaining contact with those of lower status will always be a vexing question for mainline denominational church traditions We noted at the outset of this chapter the phenomenon of 'upward lift' and later on Wesley's observations about the religious automatically rising in prosperity and wealth through their frugality and principled living In modern terms the churches see such upwardly mobile people move up and out to a 'better' community. In this process a truly indigenous church in lower status communities is always disrupted and undermined.

There are no easy answers to such questions Some churches seek to encourage their people to stay to help build a strong local church This then often involves agonising conflicts between church priorities and family priorities.

The patterns described here are characteristic of churches in many western nations It is not, however, a universal pattern As was noted in the

previous section there are many examples of thriving churches of the poor which are earthed in the life experiences of the poor, reflecting the experiences and insights of people viewing a society from its underside They would appear quite different to much of Australian church life with its institutional style and emphasis.

Apart from a re examination of priorities and practices, the churches must ask themselves whether formal styles of organisation are appropriate to all social contexts In fact we see in Australia a range of new models of ministry emerging in some blue collar communities more flexible and informal church life, extended Christian communities, ministers and lay Christians moving into neighbourhoods to start house groups, clergy with appropriate skills being ordained without tertiary level training and so on In terms of the extent of church life these efforts are relatively few This is not the place to enter into detailed discussion of such developments,but it would appear that they do rep resent a growing edge which the churches would do well to encourage.

12

STAGES IN LIFE

Church-goers often lament the lack of younger people in their congregations. In this chapter we explore church attendance patterns and other aspects of religious experience at different stages in life. We look not just at age differences but also differences related to marital status and family structure and find that:

- *People between twenty and forty years of age are poorer church attenders than any other age group. Further, they claim lower levels of orthodox Christian beliefs and religious experiences.*
- *People who have suffered any marital instability are less likely to attend church or have a religious orientation.*
- *People with children of school age appear more likely to attend church.*

Over the years it has been a fascinating experience to watch my friends and peers and their attitudes towards going to church. I watched many who were bored by church itself attend regularly for the social life and the accessibility to members of the opposite sex. Not surprisingly a great many of these dropped out as they married or discovered even more of the opposite sex in pubs where perhaps the rules were a little less stringent!

More surprising, though, have been those now with children who are once again inside a church building. Some, no doubt, are there for their children, but for others the church has taken on new significance in their own lives.

Then there are those friends who were active in the church until their marriages broke down. Now they recount with bitterness the judgmental and unfeeling attitudes of other church goers whilst they were in that time of turmoil. Feeling unaccepted and unloved, they have severed all church connections and look for support and sustenance in other directions.

Church attendance rates vary for different age groups and for people at different stages of the human life cycle. We saw in part 2 that the age profile of a community has an impact on likely church attendance rates, as do the levels of marital instability and the stages in life of residents. There has been a range of research in different countries and a range of theories have been developed. Those who argue the importance of life cycle factors suggest that the journey through life is much more than the simple fact of growing older. It also involves the assumption of different roles and responsibilities, freedoms and restrictions (Glock, Ringer and Babbie 1967, 46). To simply look at age differences, it is argued, is to lose sight of the fact that two people of identical age may be at completely different places in the human life cycle.

Various writers have stressed different aspects of the life cycle as affecting church attendance. Most writers suggest church involvement is high for children and young teenagers. For the Protestant churches most begin their involvement in the Sunday schools. Even many parents who are half-hearted in their own commitment prod their offspring into frequent attendance. The process of moving into adolescence and early adulthood is seen to tend to reduce church attendance.

Children are making the break from their parents, discovering their own identities and values and enjoying the freedom of adulthood without family responsibilities. It is suggested it is a period when many make decisions to take religion more seriously or else abandon the faith of their childhood (Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi 1972, 59).

This decline between eighteen and thirty-five years has come to be known as the *traditional* model of life-cycle changes in church attendance (Bahr 1970). It suggests a sharp drop in attendance for young adults followed by an increase in attendance with increasing age.

Other researchers have argued that as people marry and form families of their own, their patterns of church attendance will vary. The *family cycle* model suggests that as people form families they are likely to increase their church involvement. As their parents before them, young parents will be concerned to give their children a religious upbringing. They are likely to feel an increased responsibility to be involved with the institution to which they are sending their children for religious instruction (Nash and Berger 1962). On the other hand, as their children grow up, the parents' concern to attend church will lessen. This model has been tested in a range of studies in the United States. In general, increases in attendance were found to be more

pronounced in families with children over five years of age (e g. Lazerwitz 1961).

By contrast, on the basis of their research Glock, Ringer and Babbie (1967) proposed a *family surrogate* theory In this model, persons without spouses (e g widowed or separated) or married persons without children participated more in church life as a substitute This theory has not found much support in other studies in the USA.

Some researchers have suggested a *family strain* model — living apart from one's family, coming from a broken family or a family in which there is conflict or marital strain is likely to encourage disaffiliation from the churches (Greeley 1978, 102). Some have suggested a *social disengagement* model to describe church attendance patterns from middle age onwards. This model argues that for aging individuals there is a progressive severing of ties with their previous involvements of all kinds.

As people get older their church attendance is likely to decrease. Particularly for those over age sixty, it has been observed that, whilst there are many obvious reasons why attendance might decline, elderly people are more likely to pray or have strong religious beliefs.

In this chapter we shall report evidence from the 'Who Goes Where?' study that lends support to most of the above theories Results will be presented in three sections: *age differences*, followed by *family size and structure differences* and finally differences due to *marriage and marital instability*.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE: A HABIT OF THE ELDERLY?

It is a common cry that young people are not interested in church Certainly within many Protestant churches there is a growing concern amongst congregations that they are becoming increasingly elderly.

Such concerns about the lack of young people in church are not new. Hans Mol quotes a range of historical comments, some lamenting the difficulties of keeping teenagers in the church and others, like this radio commentator in 1965, noting the lack of twenty to forty year olds:

> How many of us have watched televised church services, and how many of us have noticed the composition of the congregations? If you think about it you will probably recall seeing children and teenagers and mature or middle-aged people and old people, but there seems to be an age gap, a conspicuous absence of people in the age group from about twenty to about forty-five. Yet there are three and a half million people in this group, more than a quarter of the total population of the Commonwealth of Australia . . . These are the people who must necessarily have drive and enthusiasm to build their careers and make their homes, yet somewhere, somehow, the church seems to be losing them (Mol 1971, 33)

Whilst quoting a source from early this century which suggested that younger people were virtually unrepresented in decision making within the church, Mol comments that 'the point that decision making and power in religious denominations rests with the older generations certainly is true for 1969 also' (Mol 1971, 33).

In his survey, Mol found little variation in in the attendance rates of adults of different ages and he concluded that age made little difference to church-going (Mol 1971 35) There were, however, some large differences between the attendance of those under and over twenty years of age Whilst around 33 per cent of adults claimed to attend church regularly, close to 60 per cent of children aged between five and fourteen years were reported as doing so. There were also some variations between denominations The percentage of Anglicans under twenty attending church was found to be twice as large as the percentage of Anglicans over twenty who were regular attenders Such a pattern was not as pronounced amongst Catholics (1971, 35) Indeed, an examination of his data suggests that variations in attendance related to age differences were larger than the differences between the overall attendance rates of the non Catholic denominations (see appendix 4) This would tend to suggest that for the non Catholic sample, age is likely to be a more powerful predictor of attendance than denomination.

There is evidence of important age fluctuations in Mol's data hinting at imminent changes in religious orientation Unfortunately, Mol's overall conclusions that age differences have little impact on religious orientation served to mask what perhaps was a much more important set of effects than he imagined at the time.

Many would argue that the period since the 'Religion in Australia' survey has seen an upheaval in the age structure of church attendance It is often argued today that twenty to forty year olds are far less likely to attend church and that church attenders are markedly older than the population as a whole (e.g. Drayton 1980, Wilson 1983).

In his update in 1985, Mol acknowledges more recent work by commenting that since the 'Religion in Australia' survey was carried out, important changes have taken place (Mol 1985, 80) After analysing some data on age effects for different denominations he concludes, 'Since the 1960s the exodus from the churches has not only been spear headed by the men, but also by the young' (p. 81).

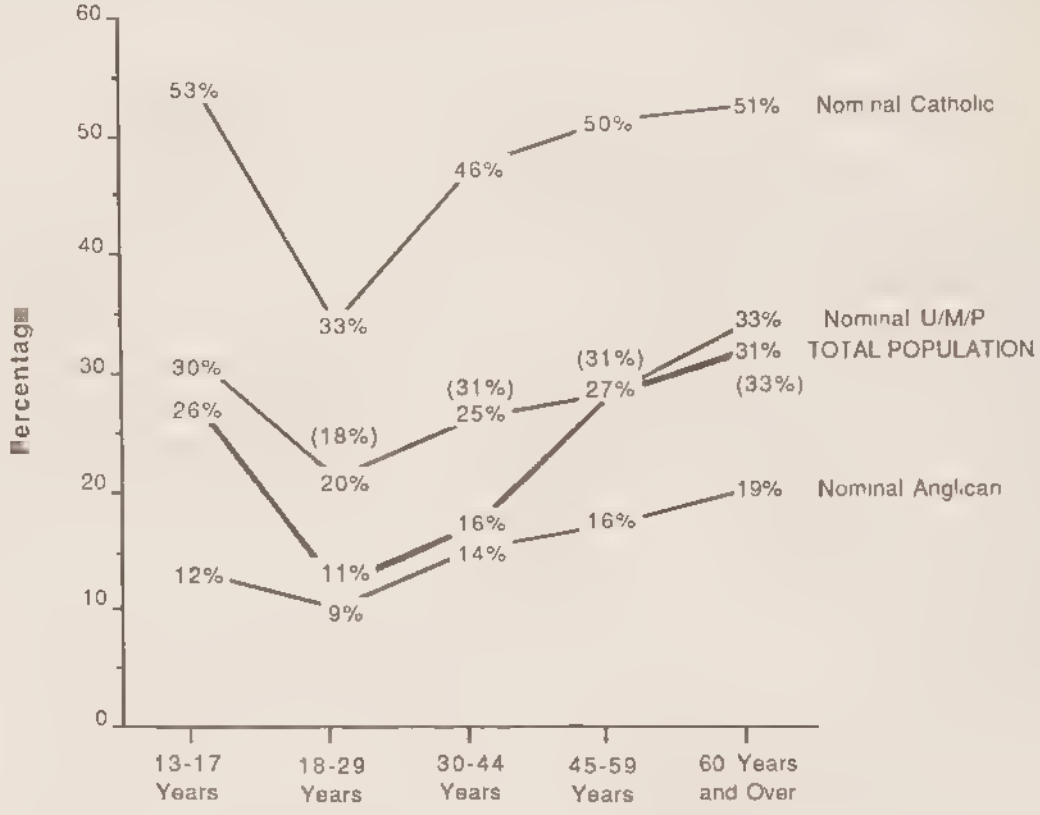
What Do the Surveys Tell Us?

Let us turn to the results of the 'Who Goes Where?' study Church attendance rates for the different age groups in McNair Anderson and AVSS surveys are given in figure 12 1 The McNair Anderson results show highly significant variations in attendance rates Attendance is high amongst teenagers (particularly Catholic teenagers) and drops dramatically for young adults, rising again with age to a peak amongst those aged over sixty years

These patterns cannot be explained by other factors in the surveys Even after adjusting for the effects of other variables, age differences have a big im

Figure 12.1 Age Differences in Church Attendance (1983/84)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources McNair-Anderson and AVSS (figures in brackets are from the AVSS)

pact on patterns of church attendance (see appendices 2 and 3) The age differences in regular church attendance do not appear to be reflected amongst those who have not attended church in the last twelve months The McNair Anderson survey suggests that for people over eighteen years of age, around 50 per cent have not attended church for twelve months in each of the age categories The shifts in church attendance between the different age groups largely reflects the varying percentages of those with at least peripheral involvement with the churches who choose to be more or less regular in their attendance Around 15 per cent of those under forty five years of age claimed no religious affiliation compared to less than half that amongst those over forty-five years The distinct jump suggests a different orientation to the churches amongst those born since World War II

Other Aspects of Religious Orientation

Are the differences in the church attendance rates of the various age groups mirrored in other aspects of religious orientation? Table 12 2 suggests that

Table 12.2 Age Differences in Religious Orientation (1983)

GENERAL RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION	Under 18	18–29	30–44	45–59	Over 60
Have a high level of religious orientation	14%	11%	23%	26%	25%

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES FACTOR	Under 18	18–29	30–44	45–59	Over 60
Member of church/religious organisation	23%	17%	30%	30%	29%
Voluntary work for church/ religious organisation	6%	7%	12%	15%	12%
Regular attendance at church	21%	18%	30%	31%	33%

ORTHODOXY OF BELIEFS FACTOR	Under 18	18–29	30–44	45–59	Over 60
Holds to orthodox Christian beliefs	17%	20%	30%	26%	19%
Relevance of first three commandments	11%	14%	25%	29%	36%

EXPERIENTIAL FACTOR	Under 18	18–29	30–44	45–59	Over 60
Aware of a supernatural power	18%	27%	32%	35%	38%
Close to and affected by a powerful spiritual life force	9%	10%	18%	23%	22%
Prays regularly	18%	23%	34%	44%	43%

ETHICALISM FACTOR	Under 18	18–29	30–44	45–59	Over 60
Relevance of final seven commandments	35%	45%	57%	67%	80%

Source AVSS (see appendix 2 for details of each variable)

they are Older people are more likely to be members of a church, to pray regularly, to claim to have had experiences of the supernatural or to believe in the relevance of the Ten Commandments. In the range of questions about general religious orientation, older people come out as being significantly more religious In all the above areas, the age differences tend to be even more significant than they are for church attendance The exceptions are in the area of orthodoxy of religious beliefs and voluntary work done for churches where age differences do not show up as statistically significant.

Where sample sizes are large enough the breakdown of AVSS data into denominational sub groups suggests that the age patterns in these religious variables is mirrored across all denominations Particularly strong in all denominations are the differences in the attitudes of various age groups to the Ten Commandments.

The age differences reported here cannot be traced to the effects of other variables in the study Even after taking account of the effects of all other variables, age differences continue to make a big difference to religious orientation. The details are given in appendix 2

These results suggest that at the present moment those aged between eighteen and thirty years have a less positive orientation towards religion than those over thirty years Looking at the responses to the various AVSS questions of those *under* eighteen years of age we see that there tends to be higher rates of church involvement than amongst eighteen to thirty year olds, but they appear to have less religious orientation when measured by the experiential and ethicalism factors.

Such results will not provide much encouragement for the churches as they look towards the future The process of growing from adolescence into adulthood appears still to be a time in which people find it hard to relate the faith of their childhood to the adult world they are entering *Of central importance to the churches is the issue of assisting young adults to discover a faith that makes sense in the adult world.*

At this point in the discussion it is appropriate to raise a basic question Are variations in attendance for different age groups a product of their changing circumstances in life or are there differences in the church attendance patterns for different generations? We have found attendance rates are lowest for twenty to thirty years olds Do we assume that people of that age are always the poorest attenders and that as they grow older their attendance rates will improve? Or rather should we be looking at differences in the life experiences of that generation and their relationship with the churches which may have created lower attendance rates? In the latter case we cannot necessarily assume that as such a generation grows older, they will automatically increase their church attendance These alternative viewpoints are not necessarily mutually exclusive In the real world both factors might be operating together, in different ways at different points in time.

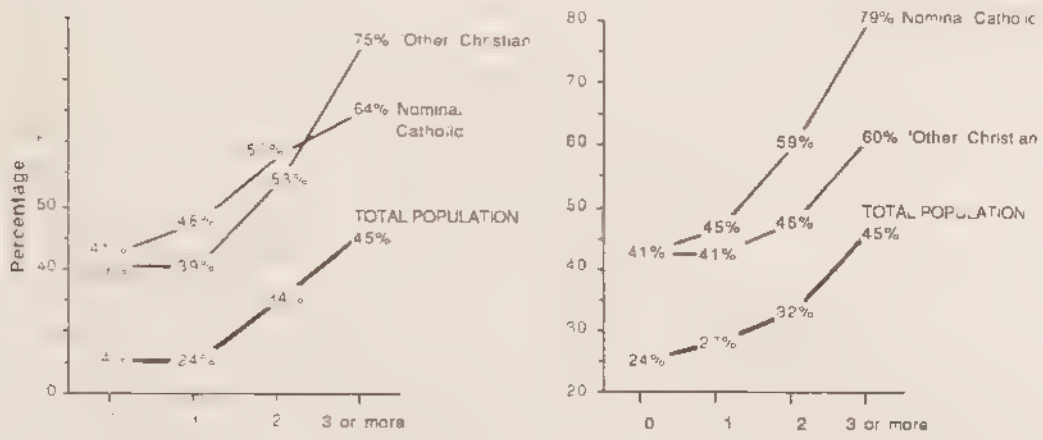
In this chapter we shall focus on life cycle factors before turning our attention in the next chapter to generational differences.

GOING FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN?

Church attendance appears to vary for different sizes of families and between families with children of different ages. It is most pronounced for, although not confined to, Catholic mass attendance. The survey data in the 'Who Goes Where?' study suggests that people in families with children aged between five and seventeen years of age are more likely to attend church than those without. This can be seen in figure 12.3.

Figure 12.3 Children in Household and Church Attendance (1983–84)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



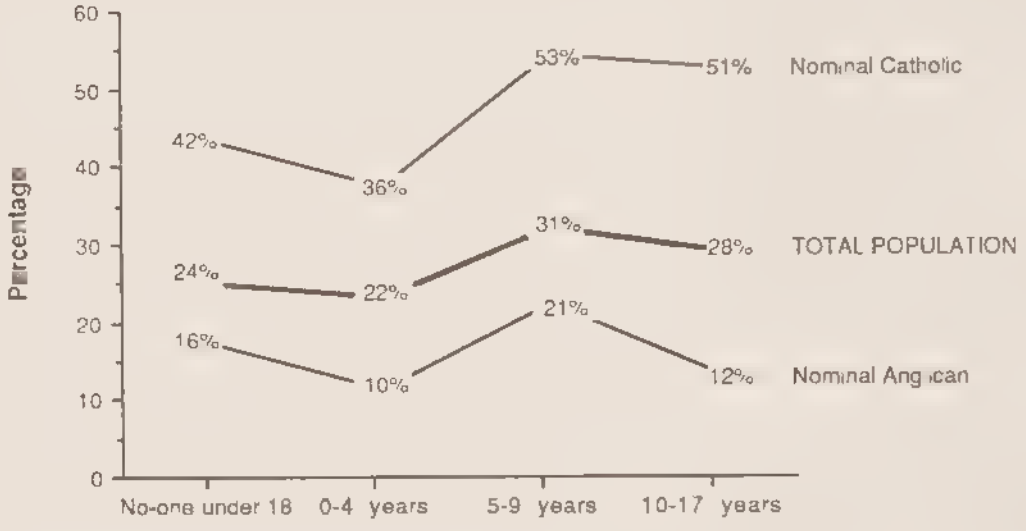
Source: McNair Anderson

Attendance rates increase with more than one child in each age group. No significant effect was found for the number of children aged under five years. However, having young children in the household is likely to mean reduced attendance rates as is shown in figure 12.4.

Compared to households with no children, attendance is lower in families with children under five years of age but higher where the youngest is over five years of age. Pre school age children could be bothersome to parents — the simple mechanisms of getting organised and surviving a church service may often be an obstacle to attendance. Possibly also the attitudes of other churchgoers and or the lack of appropriate facilities in the church may be a deterrent. Many churches today are designing creche facilities into new buildings or modifying existing designs to this end.

Figure 12.4 Church Attendance and Age of Youngest in Household (1983/84)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source McNair-Anderson

Attendance at church increases amongst families with children of school age. Evidently, it is important for many to give their children a religious upbringing. Whilst for some this may mean simply sending their children to Sunday school or a church school, for others it may involve increasing their existing peripheral involvement in church life to a more regular habit. In such a model some (though certainly not all) of those dropping out of regular church life may resume their involvement, if not for their own spiritual needs, at least for the perceived needs of their children.

This increased level of church attendance amongst families with school-aged children does not appear to be accompanied by any increased religious beliefs or experiences or by an increase in overall religious orientation. Analysis of responses to the various religious questions in the AVSS found no significant relationships between the age of children in families and other aspects of religious orientation.

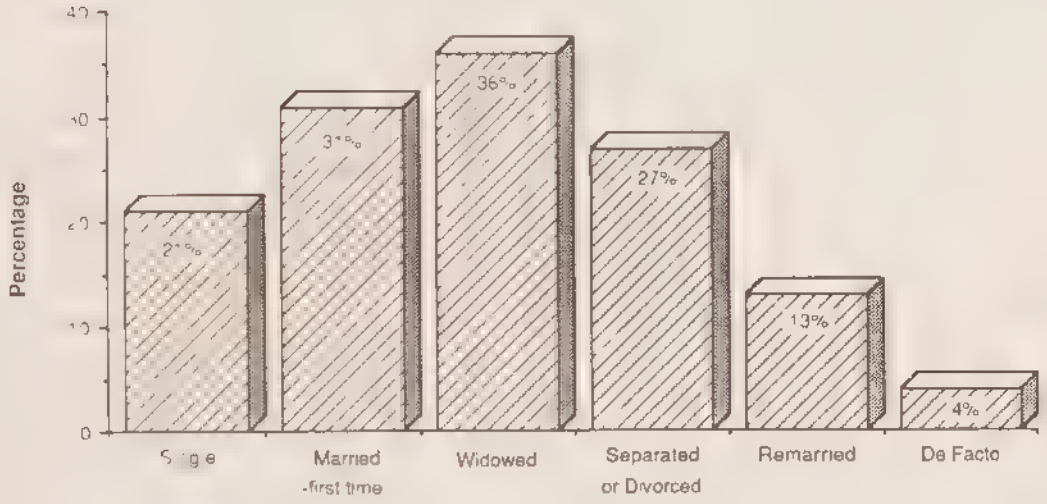
Whilst it may be encouraging to those in the churches to feel that there is some flowback as children reach school age, it should not be overstated. Such flowback is likely to be only from those who had been involved in church life in adolescence. Further, it is likely to be only a proportion of such people. A strategy that sees Sunday schools as the only real medium for feeding people into church life is, in all probability, a recipe for declining church numbers.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AND MARITAL STATUS

Church attendance rates appear to be higher amongst those who are married than those who are not. Those living in de facto relationships or who have experienced marital break up are much less likely to attend. People who have remarried are poorer attenders than those who have married only once. The results are given in figure 12.5

Figure 12.5 Marital Status and Church Attendance (1983)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source AVSS

It is quite evident from these results that those who have had to face marital instability show a lower attendance at church than those who are married for the first time. This may reflect a greater tenacity on the part of church goers to hold together unhappy marriages. On the other hand, it might also reflect a feeling amongst those who have struggled with marital instability that they are being judged or found unacceptable by churches or church goers. A few years ago a work colleague of mine and his wife separated. Whilst technically the innocent party in the separation, the wife felt she had to leave the church of which she had been a part because of the attitudes of those around her. She moved to another church, many might have given up altogether.

Although not shown here, it is worth noting that lower church attendance rates amongst those remarried in de facto relationships, separated or divorced are also reflected in a lower religious orientation. Such people are less likely to hold to conventional Christian beliefs or to the relevance of the Ten Commandments to their lives. It is worth noting however that marital status has no significant effect on reports of experiences of the supernatural. Whilst marital instability might affect the more public and more church oriented dimensions, people who are divorced, separated or remarried are no less likely to claim to have experienced the supernatural in their lives.

One clear implication of these results for the churches is the need for them to be understanding. Whatever their attitude to divorce and remarriage, they are dealing with human beings with real struggles. Whilst in the main the lower church attendance rates amongst those who are remarried, in de facto relationships, separated or divorced may stem from their involvement in quite different cultures and value systems, there are nevertheless a great many not far removed from church life for whom marital instability is a very real and personal issue.

STAGES IN LIFE AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

In the previous sections of this chapter we have seen that this study lends support to a range of theories relating variations in church attendance to different stages in life. The decline in church attendance between adolescence and young adulthood is in line with *traditional* models of life cycle changes in church attendance, as are the higher rates of church attendance with increasing age. There is also some evidence for *family cycle* models of church attendance where some people return to church life as part of their responsibility for bringing up their children. Likewise there is some support for *family strain* models which suggest that those suffering strains in their family life are likely to become less involved with the churches. This study does not find support for the *family surrogate* theories, nor for those models suggesting elderly people will reduce their church attendance rates as part of a general *social disengagement* from their previous involvements of all kinds. It appears that in Australian society church attendance is at its peak amongst the elderly.

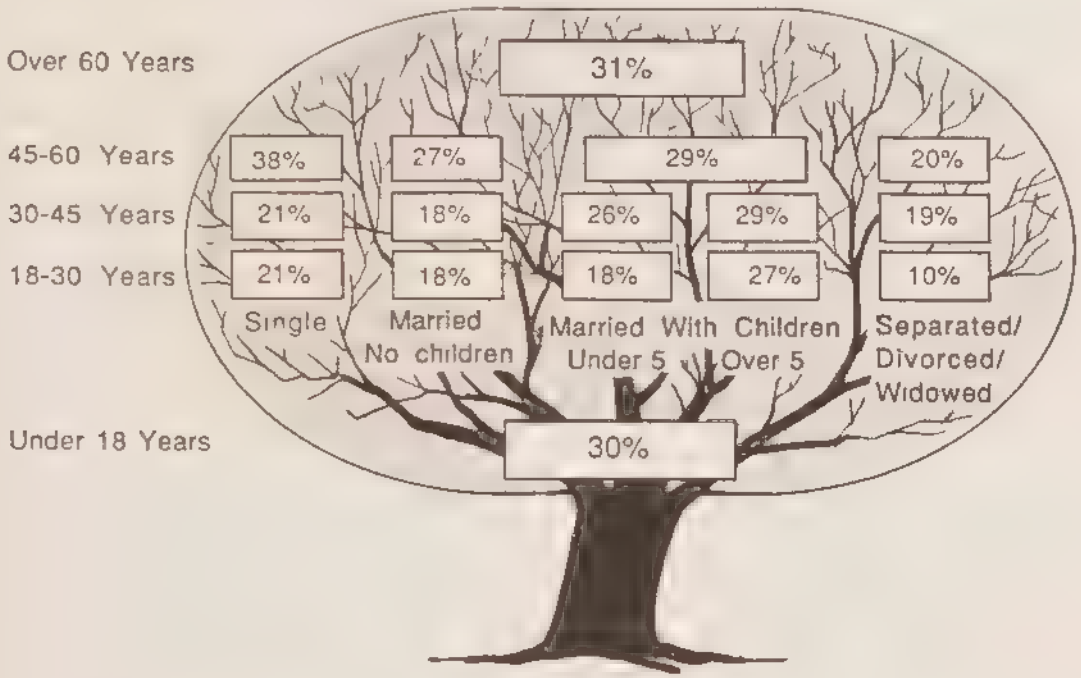
We can summarise the life cycle variations in church attendance in the composite index presented in figure 12.6.

Attendance rates are highest amongst those over forty five years, married couples with children and teenagers under eighteen years of age. The sharp decline in attendance rates that accompanies the passage into adulthood can be seen to be most pronounced amongst those who are single or married without children. Those separated, divorced or widowed exhibit much lower rates of church attendance over all age groupings.

Churches have traditionally expended a high percentage of their resources on an involvement with children and adolescents. These results suggest the need to look much more closely at the needs of some other groups in the community: young adults not yet having children of their own, families with very young children and people struggling with marital instability. To

Figure 12.6 Life Cycle Variations in Church Attendance (1983/84)

Percentage in Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source McNair-Anglicare

start to understand these groups and to assist them to express their religious experiences within the framework of church life would be, for the churches, important steps towards developing more solid foundations in Australian society

BUT WHAT ABOUT GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES?

Thus far we have considered age differences in church attendance as simply due to life cycle factors common to all generations. But each generation experiences life in a particular era. Each era has its own formative aspects. Each generation is conditioned by these experiences. The churches as social institutions respond one way or another to the social conditions in which they find themselves.

It is important to go beyond life cycle factors in seeking to understand the church attendance rates of the different age groups. In the next chapter it will be argued that generational differences have had a major effect on church life in this country over the last twenty years.

13

A MISSING GENERATION?

Many writers have suggested that dramatic changes took place in patterns of church-going during the late 1960s and early 1970s, that younger people caught up in the emerging youth sub-culture of the period moved out of traditional church life in large numbers. This study provides some evidence of this and suggests that those most seriously affected are the mainline Protestant churches. In the process of change many new forms and styles of church life have been emerging, the most notable of which has been the growth of Pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement.

I was brought up during the 1950s in a post-war Australia that was experiencing the longest continuous economic boom that this country has known. It was an era of rising affluence for many, an era that saw the arrival of television and a whole range of consumer goods. It was an era of optimism, of men landing on the moon.

My life experiences have been quite different from those of my parents. Born in the early decades of this century they have lived through two world wars and a depression. My mother was the daughter of a fairly itinerant family that often struggled to make ends meet, my father, having endured anti-semitic persecution and both Nazi and Russian occupation of his native city of

Budapest, came as a man already in middle age to this country with nothing on which to build a new life but his resourcefulness and determination. Starting penniless, their married lives have been about building a safe and secure home and future for themselves and their child.

How different have been the life experiences of these two generations of my family. They have conditioned us in quite different ways, fashioned our values and attitudes to society and social institutions and affected our priorities. No doubt they have also fashioned our attitudes to the church and our religious values and meanings systems. It is the impact of such generational differences on church attendance that is the central focus of this chapter.

The Turbulent Sixties

I was a teenager during the 1960s. It was a turbulent time that saw the emergence of an optimistic yet angry youth subculture. With a profound optimism that we could change the world and an anger at what had gone before, alongside the imposition of military conscription for a pointless war, we set about developing new values and styles of life to replace the old. In the midst of this the church seemed archaic, reactionary, irrelevant.

Of course all of the above is highly emotive and impressionistic. Nevertheless, the late 1960s and early 1970s did appear to be difficult times for the churches. Under attack from young people were the moral codes the churches had held very dear and central to their teachings. 'Be a good citizen' was being replaced by 'do your own thing!'

Young people active in the churches at the time were faced by this divergence of cultures. In my experience it was like being torn between two worlds. In an era when the young were seeking to change the world, many of us looked to the church and to faith to be at the forefront of change. Instead we met a church that was, in the main, quite resistant, whose leadership at the local level saw the youthful and naive visions of the young as posing very significant threats.

I am amazed how few of my peers have retained any active involvement in the churches. Many simply left to pursue more secular pleasures. Others have become more involved in Eastern mysticism, still others have become immersed in conservation and its philosophic ideals. Those that remained within the churches have often retained only a loose denominational loyalty and have been consciously working to develop different forms of church life.

THE 'WHO GOES WHERE?' STUDY

This is not the place for too much self analysis. I have included these reflections here to raise in a clear way some of the generational issues that underline the thrust of this chapter. Do the surveys available to this study lend any support to suggestions that different generations will develop different patterns of church attendance?

The principle criticism of the life cycle theories of church involvement such as those outlined in the previous chapter is that they do not take into account inter-generational differences or social change taking place during a person's lifetime. Wingrove and Alston (1974, 324) for example argue that whilst there are age fluctuations they vary from generation to generation. They urge that church attendance should not be investigated in a social vacuum and suggest that attendance is related to the mood of the times.

We have talked of a distinction between life cycle and generational influences on church attendance. In thinking about generational differences we can make a further distinction. Firstly, we can talk about *period shifts*, where attendance is affected across all age groups due to some changing circumstances or events taking place in society. All age groups will be affected, although perhaps to a varying degree. Secondly, there can be *cohort effects* where attendance rates amongst one age group in society are affected by changes in the relationship between that age group and the wider community (Bracher 1986, 5). Of course, in practice these two concepts can be quite inter-related.

To discern the impact of generational factors on church attendance requires data collected over many years. To this end we have brought together opinion poll data on church attendance collected since 1960. The attendance rates for different age groups between 1960 and 1983 are given in figure 13.1.

During the 1960s it would appear that age made little difference to church-going. There is little variation due to age in the early 1960s surveys, the 1967 results, Mol's 'Religion in Australia' survey (1966) discussed in the last chapter, as well as two other surveys not cited here due to differences in attendance categories.

By the end of the 1970s, however, the distinct pattern had emerged that attendance rates were much lower amongst younger adults. The pattern has become more marked with the passing of time.

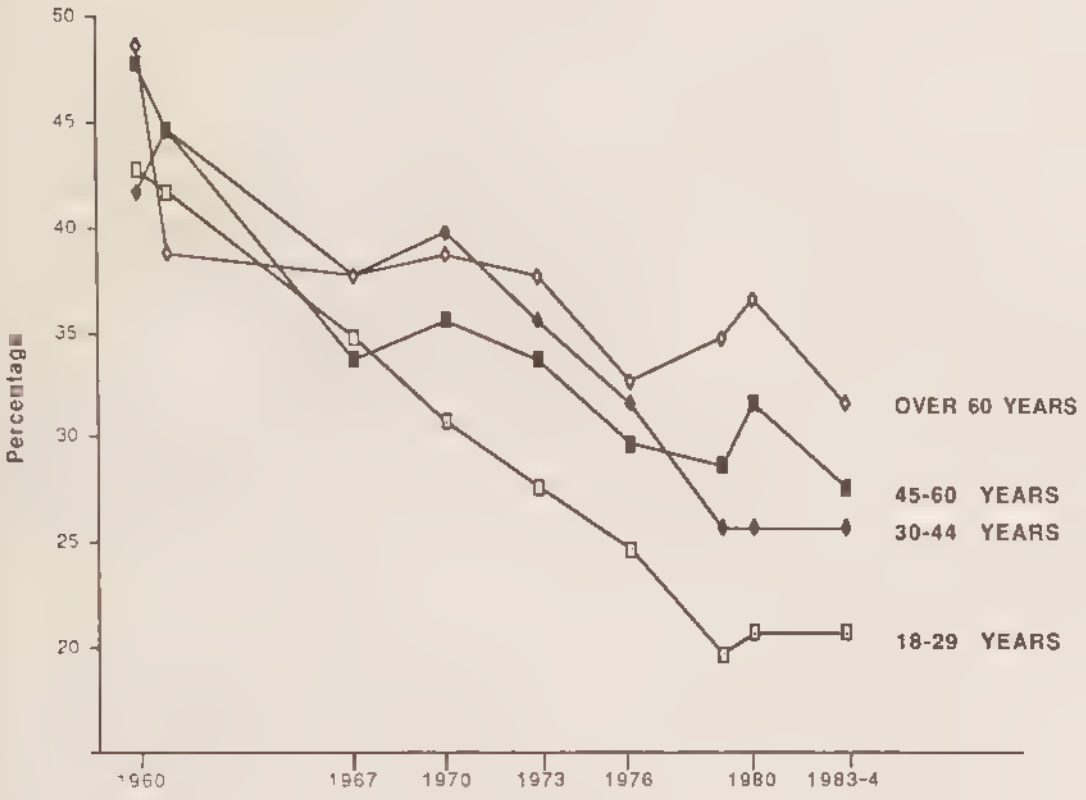
The results in table 13.1 therefore suggest that *the last twenty years have seen some significant changes taking place in patterns of church attendance amongst different age groups*. A generational shift has taken place. These results also show that *the greatest changes have occurred in the church attendance levels of young adults*.

To further explore these patterns, respondents to the various surveys were grouped into different 'age cohorts' according to their year of birth. In figure 13.2 we find the changes in attendance rates of each age cohort.

Quite clearly there has been decline in church attendance levels amongst all age cohorts between 1960 and 1976. The effect, however, has been most marked amongst those born since 1945, as can be seen in figure 13.2 where the attendance patterns of those born before and after 1945 are presented. This is a group born in the post war period and progressing through adolescence to young adulthood during the 1970s. Whatever factors have created declines during the period, they are likely to have had most impact on this age group.

Figure 13.1 Age Differences in Church Attendance 1960–1984

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources Various Social Surveys (see appendix 4 for details)

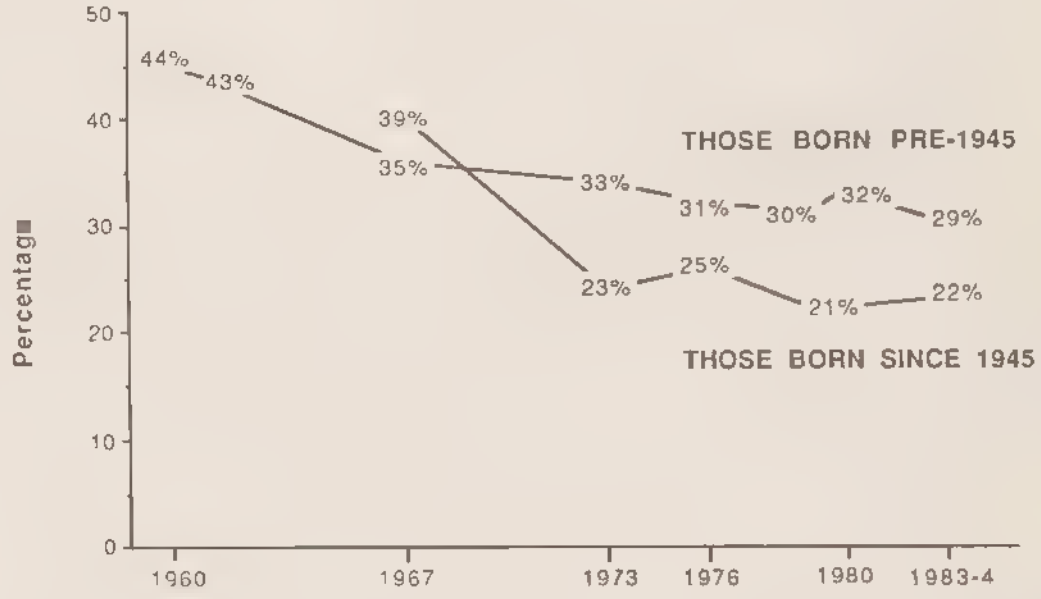
Thus we can conclude that a 'period shift' in church attendance has taken place during the 1960s and 1970s which was most pronounced amongst younger people, but which has also impacted on the entire community In the following section we look at some of the explanations offered here and overseas to explain such a shift.

GENERATIONAL FACTORS

Most generational theories have focused on changes in attitudes amongst adolescents and young adults in the late 1960s. In 1969 Roszak could write that a new counter-culture was emerging which was 'profoundly, even fanatically, alienated from the parental generation' (1969, xii) In the same era Mead noted that this generation gap was becoming a world-wide phenomenon (1970).

Figure 13.2 Cohort Differences in Church Attendance: 1960–1984

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources Various Social Surveys (see appendix 4 for details)

Robert Wuthnow is one who places great emphasis on generational effects in explaining church attendance patterns He argues that '*generation units*' — with common interests, life experiences and ideologies — need cultural symbols to build a collective identity Distinctive shifts in religious practice may be the result of one 'generation unit' attempting to differentiate itself from others Such shifts can occur either through the rejection of traditional religious practice or by the development of new religious practice (1976, 851) For Wuthnow, the counter culture of the 1960s manifested all the characteristics of a 'generation unit' and rejection of traditional church life was one of their cultural symbols He suggests that a dominant source of disaffection for many young people has been involvement with that counter culture (p 855) and that any predictions of trends in church attendance based on patterns in the past are likely to be misleading.

Wade Clark Roof and Dean Hoge also place great stress on such cultural cleavages in their analysis of church attendance in the United States 'Trends

toward greater individualism, personal freedom and tolerance of diversity have been growing amongst many Americans, especially younger and more educated Americans The result is a widening cleavage between the "tra ditional' culture and a growing "cosmopolitan modernist" sub-culture likely to increase in significance in the 1980s' (1980, 423) In their view church life is thoroughly identified with the 'traditional culture', people identified with the cosmopolitan sub culture are likely to find a barrier between their values and lifestyles and those of the churches.

Within the Australian context, Dean Drayton has focused on the nature of church life and the life experiences of different generations in South Australia to explain why people over forty years of age are better church-goers than people between twenty and forty years (Drayton 1980) The twenty to forty year age group is what he calls the 'missing generation' in church life People in this age group have different life experiences and expections from church life compared to their parents.

For the younger generation, denominational loyalties and traditions lost much importance A lively faith often mattered more than reverence. Security in the unchanging church in a world in turmoil was replaced in the post-war generation by a desire for many changes and for forums for intimacy. In a time of social change those young people within the churches sought involvement and looked to develop new forms of worship and participation. They looked for more open discussion of issues of faith A look at the style of churches made up of twenty to forty year olds, such as some of the charismatic churches, provides an illustration of some of these contrasts.

The transfer of church leadership from one generation to the next has often proved a traumatic one with deep-felt needs on both sides often blotting out the sensitivity required Since most churches were controlled by older people the new generation Drayton argues, were often frustrated in their efforts to bring change Many simply left the churches others remained within the churches but became quite cynical about mainstream church life As a consequence many churches today have an almost complete lack of attenders under forty years of age.

Different researchers have placed different emphases on generational differences during the 1960s. Bengston (1970, 16) suggests that there are three categories of explanations. Firstly there is the *great gap* position which asserts that the changes outlined above are so great as to be described as a social revolution (p 26) Then there are those claiming that the gap is an illusion, exaggerated by overzealous writers Finally, located in between these two, he postulates a *selective gap* position where, although the young adults of the period reflected the changing times in the way they expressed themselves, they remained tied to their parental generation in many basic values In this perspective the generational differences are social evolution rather than revolution

The various categories reflect different points of view on a continuum. It is easy in hindsight to write off the social changes of the period. Much of the euphoria and anticipation of that time has long passed into history. However,

there are aspects of those social changes that the churches need to understand.

The values climate of the 1980s has shifted somewhat. The social activism of the sixties has all but disappeared. However, the emphases on personal freedom and individual fulfillment have remained, as have themes of sexual freedom and experimentation with family patterns Presumably those growing up through the period retain residual distrust of many social organisations These aspects of modern values are no more conducive to church attendance than those dominant twenty years ago. If this is so then, as Jackson Carroll comments, it will be much less likely than before that those currently forming families will look to the churches for support (1978, 76). Various researchers have noted that since the sixties a large number of new religious and para religious movements have developed and expanded Those involved tend to be younger, single and middle class, many are peripheral adherents being involved for a short time only (e.g Bird and Reimer 1982, 6). Such a picture suggests that people are looking well beyond the churches of their upbringing for religious expression.

THE CHANGING FACE OF AUSTRALIAN CHURCH LIFE

In the last two chapters we have noted both life cycle and generational factors that are likely to have contributed to the creation of the attendance rates amongst the different age groups presented in this study In the previous chapter it was evident that the variations in levels of church attendance between the different age groups followed a similar pattern in all the major denominations. However, the age profiles of nominal adherents vary considerably from denomination to denomination Thus it follows that the age profiles of regular attenders must also vary

In figure 13 3 is presented an age profile of regular attenders along with the average age of each denomination

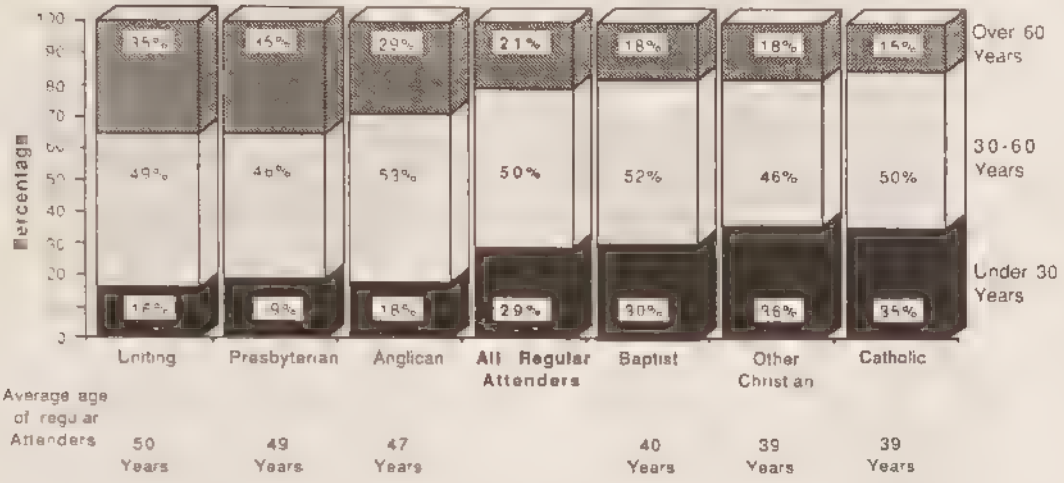
There are large variations between denominations Uniting, Presbyterian and Anglican church attenders are significantly older than Catholic, Baptist or 'Other Christian'.

This can be still more clearly seen in figure 13 4 In this figure the denominational share of regular attenders in two age groups is shown For Anglican, Uniting and Presbyterian churches, the share of regular attenders amongst those over sixty years is two and three times their share of regular attenders aged eighteen to twenty-nine years For Catholics and 'Other Christian' groups the pattern is reversed.

The implications of these results are of great importance to the churches. If the majority of new recruits into church life come from 'biological growth' that is, being born into a church family and raised in church life — then the current age profile can give strong indications of the potential future membership From figure 13 4 we can suggest that, relying on biological growth and assuming no major changes to current patterns of migration, in twenty to thirty years' time *the mainline Protestant churches would have*

Figure 13.3 Age Profile of Regular Attenders (1983/84)

Percentage of Regular Attenders in Each Age Category



...ludes those attending at least monthly

fewer attenders than is currently the case. The significance of these age variations is ignored by these churches at their peril.

The challenge of relating to twenty to thirty year olds is one that must be met by all churches. For the mainline Protestant and Anglican churches it is a question of great urgency, if only from a point of view of institutional survival at present levels.

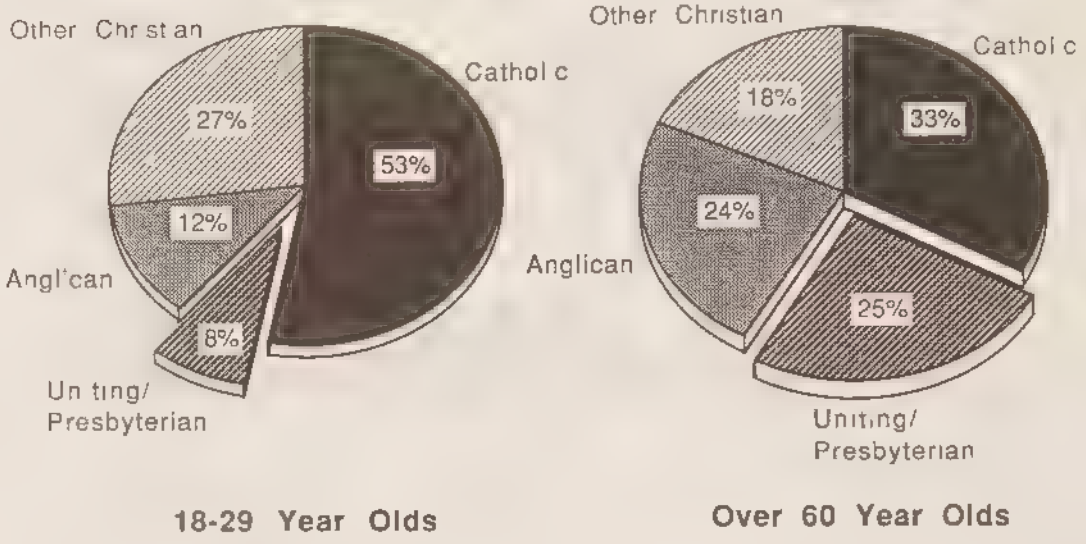
THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA — EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

In figure 13.4 the 'Other Christian' category is higher amongst younger people. Many in this category would be attached to the charismatic/Pentecostal churches growing in this country during the last ten or fifteen years. This movement, mentioned briefly in chapter 2, has been one of the most significant changes in church life in this country in recent times.

The movement has affected a large range of churches. The Pentecostal churches have grown considerably in size and in influence. Barry Chant

Figure 13.4 The Changing Face of Active Church-Goers (1983–4) — Two Generations

The Denominational Breakdown of Those Attending Church at Least Monthly



Source McNair Anderson

suggests they have been doubling in size every five years and, in 1984, showing no signs of slowing in such growth (1984, 220):

> I can remember, for instance, when there were only four Pentecostal assemblies in the city of Adelaide, with one small one in the country. The largest of these had about 100 people. All except one were using hired venues for their services. Often meetings were held in dusty, cold back-street halls, with hard benches and jangling pianos. It seems inconceivable that today there are nearly fifty Pentecostal assemblies in South Australia, many with fine, modern amenities (1984, 219)

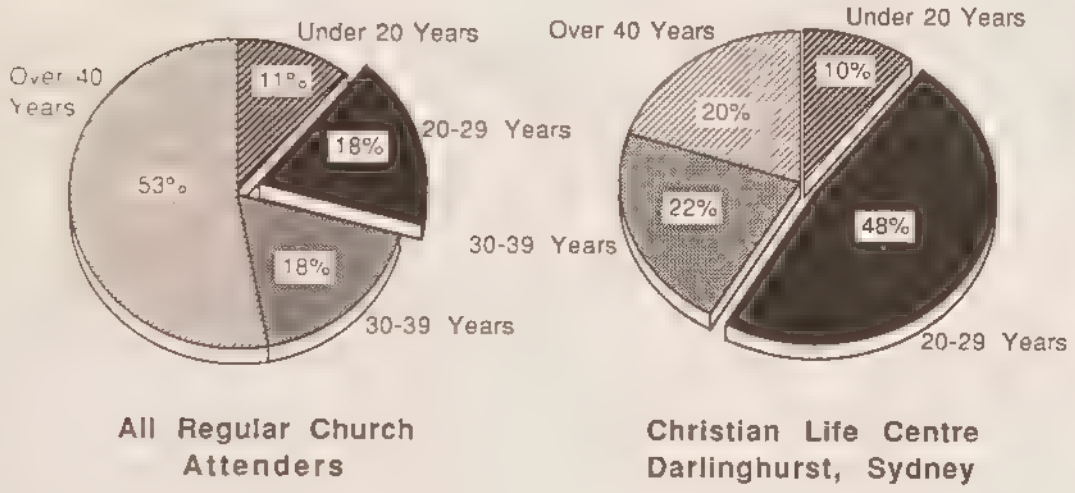
By the mid 1980s, mega churches have developed in most Australian cities. Garden City Church in Brisbane, Paradise Church in Adelaide, the Christian City Church and the Christian Life Centre in Sydney to name just a few. Many churches within mainstream denominations have also been affected. Most major denominations have recognised Charismatic Fellowships publishing journals and arranging events. One of the major agencies promoting charismatic renewal ecumenically has been Vision Ministries. Founded in 1972 it has a mailing list of over 15,000 people around Australia (Chant 1984, 231).

It is a movement in flux: the picture shifts and turns very rapidly and there is a great lack of hard data available to make clear assessments of its actual size

and impact Hopefully a church census carried out amongst NSW churches in 1986 and some other ongoing research may add to our understanding

It is a matter of common observation that these growing Pentecostal churches contain a high percentage of people aged between twenty and forty years The Christian Life Centre (CLC) situated in Darlinghurst in Sydney is an example of the city wide charismatic churches that are growing in the major cities of Australia The age breakdown of over a thousand people attending the CLC is given in figure 13 5 and compared to the age profile of regular church-goers in general

Figure 13.5 Age Profile of CLC Attenders (1985)



Sources CLC Church Records McNair-Anderson

The bulk of attenders are aged between twenty and thirty years Compared to church attenders in general the CLC has three times as many of its people in this age category The CLC provides a hint to the wider church that the age patterns described in this chapter need not be absolute.

No doubt the reasons why the CLC attracts such an age group are open to discussion Apart from theological issues and matters of faith that many would see as central factors (and which are well beyond the scope of this discussion), one could point towards a more lively worship style and the use of rhythm and movement as part of religious self expression Recently a rather perplexed journalist described a Pentecostal service as follows:

> . . . flashing lights, a full band including two saxophones and two guitarists, a drummer, even a dancer. The congregation filled a vast grey carpeted space beneath the stage. There was no sign of a cross or altar.
>
> The people were mostly young, families with children, and teenagers. When the music's pace quickened teenagers

> booped at the back, a young man tossed a child in the air.
>
> After a few numbers a collection was taken up in paper milkshake containers. The mood of the music became slow and reflective, the scene was set for prayer (*Northern Herald* 10/7/86, 10).

The same journalist quoted a rival minister as saying 'They can swing from the chandeliers, a sort of Christian disco'!

Perhaps these changing patterns of worship reflect a general tendency amongst younger people to be freer in their expression of emotions and in their emphasis on experience. As sociologist Bryan Wilson commented, 'Inner feeling has been widely hailed as more authentic than intellectual knowledge' (1976, 37).

Another aspect of such churches is their use of small group structures. Members are allocated to 'family groups' which provide forums for intimacy and contexts for growth.

Pentecostal churches have no monopoly on these ideas. Rather, they highlight patterns that are emerging where young people gather to worship together. In a range of different contexts house churches and home fellowships have been developed. The most prominent spokesperson for these groups is Robert Banks (1979, 1986). Other groups from a range of denominational backgrounds have experimented with various forms of intentional Christian communities (Preston 1982). Within the mainline denominations small group life and more lively and participatory worship are often present where younger adults are giving leadership to the life of the churches.

It is evident, though, that the growth in Pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement reflects more than generational differences in the *style* of worship and common life. As has been noted, the late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of change. The catch cry of Christians in the churches at the time could simplistically be summarised as *relevance*. In the last ten or so years, in the face of uncertain times both inside the churches and within the wider society, issues of relevance have tended to be replaced by concern for *strength to cope*. Perhaps it is no surprise then that right across the churches, Catholic and Protestant, there has been a huge reawakening of interest in the Holy Spirit and in the power of God. The massive numerical growth amongst Pentecostal churches and the influence of the charismatic movement in all mainline denominations is the most obvious manifestation of this, although it has also surfaced in other ways, such as a deepening interest in Christian traditions of mediation and quiet. Many Protestant groups have rediscovered what had once been the domain of Catholics only.

In chapter 2 we noted that some have suggested that in times of uncertainty churches with straightforward and clear-cut messages would be more likely to retain or attract a membership. In both their framework of beliefs and in their emphasis on the Holy Spirit, charismatic and Pentecostal churches can be seen to be meeting some of the deeper needs of our times. Further, from their study of patterns of church attendance in Great Britain

since 1700. Currie, Gilbert and Horsley suggest that the more secular a society is in its overall orientation the more dramatic and obvious will religious belief and experience need to be in order to attract those outside the life of the churches (1977, 63). With its emphasis on the *power* of God, and its manifestation in peoples' lives in ways such as healing, the charismatic movement can be seen to be quite dramatic in its effect.

Finally it must be underlined that the growth of the movement is related to a range of needs and circumstances. In speaking from the New Zealand context, Colin Brown notes some of the range of possibilities:

> In some cases . . . its emergence may be related to economic and social deprivation; in other instances more general social and cultural disorientation may be operative; with others (especially clergy), it may be a matter of reaction to a confused theological scene or lack of evident success; in yet other situations its emergence may have to do with protest against the ossification of institutionalised Christianity . . . and so on.

Whilst the above comments may assist the churches in reflection on their place in contemporary Australia, more thorough analysis will be required to fully understand the growth of this movement.

More Than Just a Circulation of the Saints?

A central question regarding the Pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement in general is whether the growth being registered reflects a drift of attenders from mainline and non charismatic churches to other churches in which they feel more comfortable and gain greater fulfilment. Or does it rather represent the conversion of new Christians from amongst the 50 per cent or more of Australians who have not attended a church in the last twelve months? Is it more than simply a circulation of the saints?

There are many who would see the charismatic movement as simply bleeding the active leadership from mainline churches. Bruce Wilson, for instance, argues from his own impressions that it has touched mostly church members who already viewed themselves as committed Christians (1978, 25). He further suggests that they tend to be more out of touch with the thinking of average Australians. On such a basis one could conclude that the charismatic movement is a movement largely internal to church life, providing support to its members against an increasingly hostile and foreign world or a haven for younger Christians alienated from traditional church structures.

Many, particularly from within the charismatic movement, would want to argue with such a thesis. Barry Chant quotes his own enquiries as suggesting that at least half the new members at Pentecostal churches were from the unchurched (1982, 112).

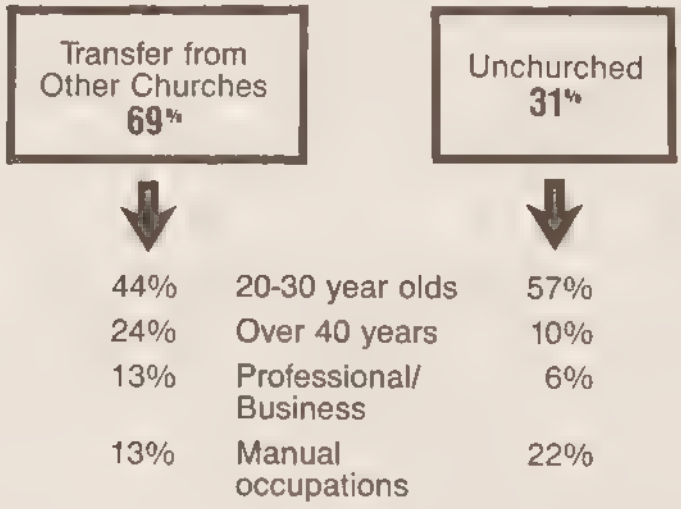
Obtaining data on this question is naturally very difficult. *Analysis of the CLC records suggests that the CLC is attracting people under forty years of age both from other churches and from outside church life altogether*

In their records a question is asked about how long a person has been a Christian Another question asks how long has the person attended the CLC. Those who claim to have been a Christian for many more years than they have attended the CLC can be assumed to be transfers By contrast those who have been Christians for about the same length of time as they have been at the CLC could possibly be conversions from outside the life of the church The results are shown in figure 13.6.

These results are of great significance to all those in leadership within church life On one hand we see an expression of discontent about mainstream church life on a large scale whilst, on the other, a desire amongst a group of unchurched Australians to become part of the life of the churches.

An analysis of the age and occupational profiles of the two groups within the life of the CLC suggests some differences. As can be seen in figure 13 6, those who are likely to have come to the CLC from outside church life tend to be younger and of lower socio economic status than those transferring from other churches The occupational result suggests an hypothesis worth further examination that the Charismatic movement and the Pentecostal churches are attracting more experientially oriented, concrete-thinking people from outside the churches for whom the more intellectually oriented and abstract notions of church life hold little attraction At the same time the movement is gaining transfers of people, maybe more skilled in the abstract and intellectual dimensions of institutional church life but who find that rather unsatisfying and are searching for something more concrete and experiential.

Figure 13.6 Origin of CLC Attenders (1985)


Transfer from Other Churches 69%
Unchurched 31%
44% 20-30 year olds 57%
24% Over 40 years 10%
13% Professional/ Business 6%
13% Manual occupations 22%

Source CLC Records

Note The 'Transfer' and 'Unchurched' categories should be treated as a rough guide only About one third of CLC attenders could not be clearly classified into one category or another due to inadequate information on records

For the Pentecostal and charismatic churches the social mix will doubtless make for interesting church life. The questions of holding a diverse clientele together will pose many challenges. They would do well to heed the comments of many social researchers into revivals that times of growth from those outside the churches usually also include a large percentage who drop out after the initial euphoria has waned. The challenge of long-term nurture is an important one for their sustained development.

* * *

The age profile of regular church attenders outlined here suggests that church going is in a state of significant change. Mainline Protestantism and the Anglican churches have the most to lose. They are institutionally vulnerable and seemingly unsure how to relate to the charismatic movement or to the needs of those born since World War II. The Catholic church faces similar problems of relating to younger people although institutionally it is shielded by the sheer bulk of nominal Catholics of younger age. For their part the Pentecostal churches are clearly becoming a major component of church life in Australia; they can no longer be dismissed as a fringe movement and appear to present one of the few instances currently where churches are reaching beyond traditional boundaries to those without church backgrounds.

In times of rapid change such as occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the churches will always be vulnerable. The lessons from the experiences of the last twenty years are about the importance of allowing people to give expression to their faith in ways that are true to their own culture and context. At the risk of generalisation, if it is true that those born before World War II saw worship in terms of reverence and the church as a certain pillar in an unstable world, the post war generation has looked towards more lively and participatory worship, for self expression and places of intimacy. To respond to these challenges will be very testing for the mainstream churches — testing, and critical for their futures.

14

MOBILITY AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

This chapter focuses on the effects on church attendance of residential mobility. In general the study reveals that changing residence is likely to lower church attendance rates. However it is also clear that, because there can be different reasons for residential mobility, its impact can also be quite different. Thus the consequences for church attendance of mobility at different stages in life must be explored.

Our family has some friends living in South Australia They have been churchgoers all their lives It is an interesting church jointly sponsored by two denominations The entire family has attended this church for many years Even now some of the children still attend the church even though they live a long way off With the children having left home the parents wished to live in a home requiring less maintenance, so they moved to another suburb Did that move affect their church involvement? No, hardly at all.

But what about another friend of mine. Marilyn has been part of a family that has moved on regularly. Often moving with the fruit-picking seasons they have rented homes or lived in caravans For several years the family lived in the one place and Marilyn became deeply involved in a church group. But then, to her dismay, the family decided to go back on the road Over the last

eighteen months she sporadically tried to attend the churches where they were staying, but somehow it was just too difficult The task of breaking in was just beginning when the time came to move on

Then again an elderly Catholic relative of mine has hardly missed a week's mass in her life Even on holidays she would simply slip into the local mass It was the act of mass that was important to her, who the other attenders were was of no consequence.

On the other hand I have some friends in an inner city church. It is quite different from your average church Indeed one wonders whether should they move, they could fit in to any other more 'ordinary' church.

Sometimes a move is a time to leave behind unwanted baggage John grew up in a manse He attended a church school as well as regularly listening to his father's sermons The moving from home to live in a flat near the university was a time to leave church behind and explore more relevant philosophies Jenny on the other hand, had been supported by church people for years through many personal and family crises A move to the other end of the city was for her too a chance to start again But did she gravitate to a church after finding it so supportive previously? No, to Jenny her move was to show herself she could cope, without supports

All of these stories are examples of residential mobility and its effect on church attendance The Australian Bureau of Statistics figures (1981) suggest that 17 per cent of Australians move home in a given year and that around 39 per cent have moved in the last five years Population mobility is an integral part of economic growth and social change in Australia, as in most western countries It shapes much of the nature of local communities and people's relationships with each other With the possible exception of the gold rushes, never before has the Australian population been so mobile (Burnley, Pryor and Rowland 1980, 15).

In this chapter, we explore a range of types of internal population migration.

The Many Causes of Residential Mobility

During their lives most Australians will move house several times There can be many reasons We see in our society many types of residential mobility People move to be close to employment or training opportunities Migration can be from rural to urban areas Then again immigration from other countries has been an important factor in the growth of our large cities (Neutze 1977, 8).

A classic study of residential mobility is that by Peter Rossi (1970) He found that many of the patterns of migration in our society are what we might term life cycle changes in residence Adolescents may leave home and rent a flat, newly married couples might buy a home unit whilst saving to buy their first house A growing family may require a larger house Some families may seek to step up in social status and move to a more desirable neighbourhood Aging couples may wish to live in smaller or more appropriate dwellings

Rossi found that residential mobility can also be part of a process of 'vertical' social mobility. Families may wish to move into a more prestigious suburb as part of a rise in social status.

Not all mobility is a result of individual choice. People caught in adverse financial conditions might have to move. Those who are renting their houses might be forced to move.

RESIDENTIAL MOBILITY AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Much of the research overseas has focused on the impact on church attendance of particular forms of mobility — rural to urban, migration from overseas, migration between regions. The results have often been conflicting.

Michael Welch and John Baltzell (1984, 76) suggest two hypotheses for understanding the impact of mobility on church attendance. Firstly, those studies that have suggested increased church attendance with mobility can be explained by suggesting that *individuals who have moved frequently in the past may be motivated to attend church services more frequently in their new community*. As most studies have originated from within the USA, where the churches' social roles are of higher profile, it could be that this hypothesis is of less relevance in the Australian context (except perhaps in some ethnic and cultural enclaves). This study shows this to be the case.

On the other hand, those studies suggesting that geographic mobility decreases religious participation are often explained by arguing that *mobility disrupts the stable web of community attachments which promote behaviour such as church-going*. Residential mobility can have the effect of breaking the control a community may have on an individual's behaviour. Mobility can thus free someone to adopt new values and patterns of behaviour.

Research in Australia

Not a great deal of work has been done on this question within the Australian context. The 'Religion in Australia' survey asked respondents how long they had lived in an area in order to test for any correlation between religious activities and 'belonging' to an area. Mol suggests that there is little evidence for mobility having any significant impact (p. 110). However he modifies this by breaking the population into age groups and suggests that for those under forty mobility does have some impact on church going, with long term residents being more likely to be regular church attenders. Long term residence would appear to increase the likelihood of participation in other church meetings and also non church meetings for all age groups. There is no comment on variations in these patterns for different denominations.

David de Vaus has also carried out some interesting research into the effects of mobility on adolescents to which we shall refer later in the chapter.

THE 'WHO GOES WHERE?' STUDY

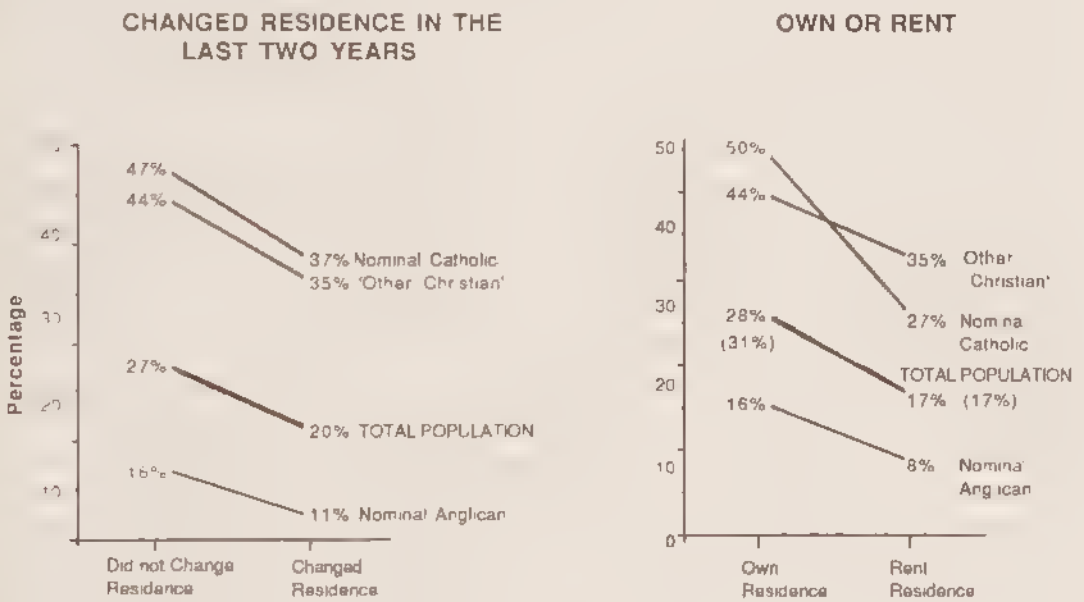
In the chapters on regional variations in church attendance we have already seen that the mobility of the community is likely to affect church attendance rates. It is evident that church attendance is highest in communities where there is little population mobility, where home ownership is high and where there are few people renting their houses.

In the McNair Anderson surveys, there are two questions available to us to examine patterns of attendance related to mobility. One of these asks whether a person has changed residence in the last two years, the other asks whether one's residence is owned or rented. Those who are renting are more likely to be mobile than those who own their homes (Shumaker and Stokols 1982: 11). Unfortunately, the AVSS did not ask respondents whether they had changed residence. It did ask the housing tenure question.

The results for these questions are shown in figure 14.1.

Figure 14.1 Church Attendance and Population Mobility (1983–4)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Sources: McNair-Anderson and AVSS (figures in brackets are from the AVSS)

Those who have changed residence in the last two years are less likely to attend church regularly by between five and ten percentage points, depending on their denomination. Likewise the owning or renting question, as can be

seen in figure 14.1 those who own their homes are around twelve percentage points more likely to attend church than those who are renting.

The denominational differences are quite striking. Anglicans who have not moved residence in the last two years are better attenders than those who have moved by around five percentage points. But for Catholics the difference is twice that. Likewise with home ownership, whilst Anglicans who own their homes are eight percentage points more likely to attend church, for Catholics the difference is twenty-three percentage points.

This is a surprising result and one to which we shall return. One might have expected that mass attendance would be more easily transferable from place to place compared to Protestant church attendance with its emphasis on fellowship.

As we have already seen in previous chapters the local churches can be regarded as one of the major types of formal community associations in a neighbourhood. We have noted similarities in patterns of church attendance to patterns of involvement in other local associations. Whilst it is not a complete test of mobility, the AVSS data suggests that, as with church attendance, participation in non-church groups is higher amongst home owners than renters.

In an earlier section of this chapter, various hypotheses were detailed regarding the effect of residential mobility on church attendance. There is little within the results of this study to suggest that mobility might increase church attendance within the Australian context. Those who might wish to establish social ties with a new community by attendance at church are most likely to do so only because in their previous residence they had already found attendance at church helpful in building such ties.

The results here impel us then to look more closely at reasons why mobility may decrease church involvement. Even theologian Harvey Cox, a great admirer of modern urbanisation, noted in his famous book *The Secular City* that high mobility plays havoc with traditional religion. 'It separates people from the holy places. It mixes them with neighbours whose gods have different names and who worship them in different ways' (1966, 47).

The importance of the stability of a community to participation in the churches was noted in part 2. A study by Kasarda and Janowitz (1974) has already been highlighted which claimed a key factor in participation was the length of residence in the area. Social scientists argue that both duration of residence and home ownership increase bonding to a particular community (Schumaker and Stokols 1982, 11). Home ownership provides social and psychological security and is more likely to represent a commitment to an area as it entails high financial investment.

These results suggest that mobility disrupts the community attachments that may have encouraged church attendance. It can be a change in life that invites reflection on previous commitments. It may be a time when previous habits of church attendance are dropped altogether or where there might be a shift in the kind of church one attends. Mormon church planners, for instance, see a mobile population as favourable to their growth. According to Allan

Black, they believe it facilitates the 'shaking loose' from pre existing patterns of affiliation (personal communications).

These issues warrant further investigation The mainline churches, particularly in highly mobile communities, cannot simply assume that those of their own denominational affiliation will automatically choose to become involved in their church.

Mobility is, however, a phenomenon that is often related to stage in life and it is to these aspects that we turn in the following section.

DIFFERENT STAGES IN LIFE

Mobility is more common amongst certain social groups and at various stages of the life cycle Further, highly mobile communities are often also characterized by high proportions of twenty to thirty year olds and families without dependents As we have seen, these groups tend to be poorer church-goers, a factor influencing the overall orientation to church-going of a particular community.

This is underlined in the results of our multivariate analysis of the McNair Anderson data (see appendix 3) Despite the impact of mobility on attendance rates shown in figure 14 1, when the effects of other variables such as age, ethnicity, family structure and socio-economic status are taken into account , the effect of mobility is largely removed *The exception is amongst Catholics. Factors such as age and socio-economic status cannot explain the drop in mass attendance amongst those who are renting their houses.*

As was portrayed in the stories at the outset of this chapter, different types of mobility can affect church attendance differently. The impact on attendance for the adolescent of moving away from home for the first time may be quite different from the impact of mobility for an itinerant worker or a family moving to a new house just a few blocks away.

Whilst we are limited by our data sources, we are able to examine mobility differences in church attendance for people at different stages in life Using the McNair Anderson sample, respondents were divided into separate categories according to their stage in life (see chapter 12 The effect of residential mobility on each category was examined.

It can be seen in table 14 2 that residential mobility most affects the church attendance rates of those under eighteen years of age, single people aged eighteen to thirty years and those aged thirty to forty-five years and either married with children over five years or having suffered marital instability or dissolution In addition those thirty to forty five year olds in the survey who were single and had changed residence were markedly higher attenders than their counterparts who had not done so.

The reasons for such patterns amongst thirty to forty-five year olds is not clear The pattern for those under thirty is more consistent Residential mobility is more likely to reduce church attendance amongst those who have not settled down to married or family life Some research by David de Vaus

Table 14.2 Life Stages Where Mobility Most Affects Church Attendance (1983–4)

Percentage Attending Church at Least Monthly

	Have Not Changed Residence	*Changed Residence in Last 2 Years*	*Difference (Percentage Points)*
Under 18 years	32%	25%	+ 7
18–30 years, single	28%	15%	+13
30–45 years and married with children over 5 years	31%	22%	+ 9
30–45 years and separated, divorced or widowed	24%	12%	+12
30–45 years and single	15%	29%	−14

Source McNair Anderson

can help in our understanding of the effects of mobility on church attendance amongst younger people.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE AS COMPLIANT BEHAVIOUR AMONGST ADOLESCENTS

David de Vaus has studied the relationship between geographic mobility and church attendance amongst a sample of Australian adolescents (1982, 391). He found in his sample that mobility did lead to a decline in church attendance but to little variation in orthodoxy of beliefs or private prayer life. In seeking to explain these patterns in his data he drew a distinction between 'compliant' forms of behaviour and that based on 'identification' with other people. In the latter case attitudes or behaviour are developed out of respect for such reference people. In the former case people adopt a particular form of behaviour, not necessarily because they believe in it, but because they see it as worthwhile to conform.

De Vaus argues that in many cases church attendance can be seen as compliant behaviour whereas beliefs, religious experiences and non observable behaviour are more likely to be the result of identification with others. His argument is that geographic mobility is likely to reduce compliant behaviour such as church attendance. Attitudes and behaviour based on reference groups, however, do not depend on the physical presence of the reference group. Thus geographic mobility is likely to have less effect on such things as religious beliefs.

In testing the compliance explanation of declines in church attendance amongst the mobile he found that the drop in church attendance with

geographic mobility was largely amongst people with a Catholic school background Is there not within Catholic traditions a greater pressure towards compliance than amongst other denominations that could lead to the stronger relationship between mobility and decline in church attendance?

Such a line of reflection appears promising in explaining the impact of mobility and its pronounced effect on Catholics that was observed earlier. We are unable to directly test de Vaus theory with the AVSS data since the hous ing tenure issue is affected by factors other than residential mobility The relationship between religious orientation is, in fact, most marked in the area of religious practices.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The data presented here on church attendance and mobility suggest that mobility tends to operate against regular church attendance and that this pattern is stronger in some denominations than in others The more pronounced differences amongst Catholics may represent a breaking free from old habits and duties in a new environment The results also suggest that the impact of mobility on attendance differs amongst people at different stages in their lives Young single adults and those experiencing marital instability or breakdown in mid-life seem the most affected.

De Vaus' research detailed previously suggests that religious change amongst the residentially mobile should be understood more in terms of *changes in the nature of social relationships than in terms of changes in residential location (1980, 200)*. The role of local cultures, peer group norms and social interactions are central, here as before, to understanding church attendance patterns Take the communities where there are many people who are or have been geographically mobile As we have seen in chapter 5 these communities tend also to be more socially and ethnically diverse Such a community generates its own cultures, values and norms Could it not be, as Bruce Wilson (1979) has argued, that exposure to such diversity generates a more relativistic viewpoint on life within which it would be more difficult for formal social networks such as the churches, to generate desired patterns of behaviour, such as church attendance? Roof(1976) has also argued that, in America at least, the more cosmopolitan were people's orientations, the less likely they were to attend church.

These results have a range of implications for the churches. At one level they underline the difficulty of traditional models of ministry and church life in highly mobile communities The potential value of regional churches in such areas was dealt with in chapter 8 At another level they should encourage churches in all types of areas to recognise the changes that are taking place in our society with regard to population mobility and to seek ways to provide opportunities for those who are mobile to find a place in their lives and, to use David De Vaus' terminology, to identify with them.

These kinds of issues are simply stated, but not so easily put into practice! In my observation one of the major blocks to the development of church forms

and structures appropriate to welcoming newcomers or more transient people is that congregations are usually dominated by long-term residents In some cases these are the people who built the church, in others they are people who lived in the area when it was just a rural village before the new estates were built. In still others they are the people who grew up in the area when it was still a 'nice' suburb, before the redevelopment and the migrant groups moved in. Whilst they no longer live in the area, they still attend to help maintain the struggling church of their childhood In their efforts to defend what they believe to be important in church life they often are unaware of, or antagonistic to, the needs of newcomers.

Of course these are broad generalisations, and there are many exceptions Yet too often, in the comfort of what it has, a church can present barriers to the outsider One of the most common laments of those engaged in various forms of evangelism in Australia runs something like this. 'They are seeking to take faith seriously, yet they just cannot fit into any of the churches around here'!

The process of moving from one neighbourhood to another can often be difficult. There is a lack of familiar people, of support networks The community may appear hostile or culturally alien There may be a process of grieving for what has been left behind There will be shyness or nervousness about intruding into church and social groups that already have their own ethos and values It is essential for the churches to understand what newcomers may be going through. Whether within the context of church life or in the outside world, supportive relationships with newcomers can build bridges between the church and the community Churches attempting such bridge-building should be welcoming in a relaxed and 'unpushy' way they should endeavour to transform the sea of strange faces into known personalities They need to offer possibilities for involvement and endeavour to listen to the particular problems and concerns a newcomer may have In the interaction the churches may learn how to organise their lives in ways that will encourage the involvement of groups currently outside the life of the church

Churches can and need to maximise their chances of responding appropriately to the challenges presented by increased residential mobility in Australian society.

15

MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

The phenomenon of multiculturalism has dramatically changed the face of Australian life over the last thirty years. With new immigrants have come new ideas, new cultures and new religions to exist alongside the Anglo-Australian traditions.

Multiculturalism has brought many challenges to the churches. For the Catholic church it has presented problems in dealing with an influx of Catholics with widely differing religious traditions. Some ethnic groups attend mass much more regularly than others.

For the Protestant churches the challenge has been somewhat different. Many churches in highly diverse communities face a basic choice: be willing to adapt to a changing context or cease to exist. Issues of bridge-building are very real if mainline Protestant churches are not simply to represent the Anglo-Australian establishment. There is however evidence of increasing diversity within several mainline denominations.

In this, as in other aspects of the 'Who Goes Where?' study, it is clear that the churches are at important crossroads.

The last thirty or so years have seen over three and a half million people come to Australia. As a result of conscious government policy many have come on assisted passages to aid in post-war development. Others have come through family reunion, still others have been refugees. Including the children born in Australia one can suggest that at least one in three Australians have a link with migration. As Alan Walker commented in 1961: 'The whole world has broken into the Australian scene. This is another of the imponderable forces at work in the Australian consciousness and society. The isolation of this land is gone forever' (1961, 72).

Jim Houston provides some further details of multicultural Australia. We are an amalgam of over 140 ethnic groups speaking 100 languages and practising over 40 religions. Melbourne is now the third largest Greek-speaking city in the world. He suggests that, after Israel, Australia is the most cosmopolitan society on earth (1979, 16).

This process has not been a new one in Australia. Since 1838, with the German Lutheran settlement in the Barossa Valley, migrants from many parts of the world have sought to establish a new life in Australia. They have brought with them their cultures, languages and religions. The gold rushes of nineteenth century Australia saw the arrival of people from a great many nationalities. One of the dominant groups was the Chinese and racial tension on the gold-fields was often very high.

Indeed the first white settlers in Australia in 1788 were migrants. Quoting Jim Houston again:

> Australia has always been multicultural. When Captain Arthur Phillip (who was half German) hoisted the British flag over Sydney Cove there were 600 Aboriginal 'nations' living on the continent, speaking 200 mutually incomprehensible languages. That day, several more languages joined the 'family of the nation': the English convicts and soldiers also numbered Irish, Jews, Negroes, Americans, Germans, Greeks who laid, not only the foundation of a colony, but of a multicultural and multi-lingual nation that has never faltered in its diversity (1979, 14).

It is important to understand that the major denominational groupings in this country have had their historical roots as *ethnic* churches in the new colony. The Anglican church was the established church in England and the Presbyterian that in Scotland. Methodist traditions were linked to Welsh culture, Lutheran to German and Scandinavian backgrounds.

The Catholic church in Australia reflected its Irish background and identity. As a substantial ethnic minority Catholics participated in the building of white Australia, modifying the traditions and institutions brought from the United Kingdom (Hally 1981, 14). Many of the struggles between 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' forces in Australia can be traced to differences between ethnic and cultural groups. In a nation where the three major denominations had all

been the official churches of their homeland, it was necessary to develop forms of life that could accommodate them.

Historically religion has had an important role in the maintaining of ethnic identity and, as Bruce Kaye comments, that role is still a significant factor in contemporary Australian life (1985, 6).

LIVING IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

As we saw in part 2 ethnic groups are not evenly spread in all communities but tend to be concentrated in certain communities, dramatically affecting the social face of such areas.

From his experiences of living in a very multicultural community, Ken Rolph provides a colourful checklist for us to compare with our own communities (1985, 63):

Do any of the following seem unusual:

- ☐ The local shopping centre has three video shops One is Greek, one Arabic and one Indochinese.
- ☐ Buddhist monks in robes walk to the railway station.
- ☐ The general store has music cassettes with handwritten Arabic labels
- ☐ Yashmaks are now part of the official school uniform.
- ☐ Alongside the Mr Whippy van comes the Tio Miguel van, selling hot dogs and tacos.
- ☐ School sport is cut back during Ramadan.

If you don t live in a highly multicultural community you will find it hard even to start to understand the struggles and joys of life in such diverse communities How does it feel as an Anglo-Australian to be in the minority in your own suburb? Many such people have found the changing shape of their neighbourhood to be a particularly threatening experience. Others have discovered what a rich experience it is to gain an intimate feel for another very different culture.

The initial assumption of post war immigration was that migrants should be expected to *assimilate* into the Australian (Anglo celtic) way of life The attitude of many Australians was, and still is, that Australia is 'our' country and newcomers should 'become like us' However the last twenty years have seen changes in official policies, if not always in community attitudes Policies of assimilation have given way to goals of *cultural pluralism* the right of ethnic groups to participate fully in the life and social institutions of Australian society without needing to lose their cultural and ethnic identities. Such a philosophy encourages all groups to contribute in their own way and requires a willingness of all people to be open to change as cultures interact The 1977 report of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council argued for three principles for a multicultural Australia social cohesion, equality and cultural identity

The period has seen ethnic communities seeking to support and encourage their members in a range of ways Such groups and networks have provided assistance in the transition to life in a new country — with

information, services, some informal welfare assistance, a sense of community and shared experiences

The growing multiculturalism of this country has made many Australians rather nervous and defensive, afraid that the Australia they have known and feel comfortable with is on the verge of disappearing. The report of a commission into multicultural ministry undertaken in Melbourne by the Anglican Church in 1985 comments that some feel that Australians with little sense of their own ethnic identity could find it difficult to attain mature relationships with people from other cultures Many British Australians simply do not realise that they are themselves an ethnic group, albeit a large one (1985, 12).

These problems are compounded by ethnocentrism — the tendency of people to judge other cultures by their own standards, assuming that their own cultural values are superior to all others. Whilst this attitude can have some positive ramifications, such as to foster pride and identity, it can also be extremely destructive, hindering mutual understanding and making people unable to see weaknesses within their own cultures (Wilcox 1979, 86)

And from the Other Side?

For those arriving on our shores, the pilgrimage has not always been plain sail ing either The values norms and cultures of their new home often do not fit smoothly with those of their roots Charles Wilcox reports a comment from a leader of an ethnic community spoken in a broad Australian accent: 'I grew up here and seriously sought acceptance as an Anglo-Australian, but after thirty years of trying, I had to face the fact that I am a Greek Australian' (1982, 23)

The tension is also very real for subsequent generations, one often hears of the difficulties for the 'lost' second generation The children of immigrants struggle to understand their identity Caught between two cultures they are often accepted by neither:

> I remember vividly one bus ride home from school after my grandfather had died. My mother was in mourning; that is she was dressed in black, a standard caricature of migrant women. Out of respect to my mother I sat next to her, but my embarrassment in front of my school friends was obvious. My mother dressed in black was different, my association with her made me different.
>
> I was able to keep my two worlds apart. I never invited my friends home because I feared that they would ridicule me, because we lived a different lifestyle. The food we ate was traditionally Italian. We ate unbuttered bread and there was wine, rather than milk, on the table.
>
> The difference appeared so vivid to me and the jeopardy so real that I did not want my two worlds to mingle at all. I liked home, but I constantly wished it was not so 'Italian', because I

> believed that my 'Italianness' was detrimental to my character (Pittarello 1981, 4).

The process of growth in bringing two cultures together is not always easy:

> Having grown up in Australia, my image of Italy was distorted by the stereotyped Italian character which was caricatured around me. Italians were supposedly dirty, worked in fruit shops and milk-bars, had greasy black hair, brown eyes and olive complexion. I looked Italian and could easily be identified with the stereotype.
>
> In 1974 an occasion arose for me to spend some time in Italy . . . My stay left an indelible mark on me . . . Moment by moment I was discovering more about myself and the heritage I was part of.
>
> When I returned to Australia, I did see myself and my environment differently. Over the time I realised that being Italian, rather than being a liability to me, was actually a great asset. I was a part of two cultures, with two languages and lifestyles (Pittarello 1981, 5).

A range of research has been carried out into the attitudes and struggles of immigrant groups. One of the most common theories is the three generation model originating in the work of Marcus Hanson. In 1938 he suggested that 'what the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember' (quoted by Bender and Kagiwada 1968, 360). According to this model, the second generation, insecure about their identities and place in society, are likely to wish to suppress their ethnic culture. The subsequent generation, more accepted and entrenched in mainstream society, is more likely to take pride in their past and seek to develop that aspect of their identities.

Whether it is perceived or not, religion can play a central role in giving groups an identity in a new social milieu. The origins of Catholicism in this country are an excellent case in point. Irish Catholic values, traditions and practices provided a reference point for those in the new largely Protestant colony.

Will Herberg developed the three generations model as he sought to explain the cohesiveness of American society in the 1950s. He argued that immigrants used religious communities as their basic means of adjustment to a new social environment. An ethnic church was a place where they could reproduce the old social order, values and traditions. Such groups, he argues, were looked down upon by native Americans. The children of immigrants quickly abandoned such cultural traits in their quest to be 'proper' Americans. Their children, in turn removed from the handicaps of ethnicity, were free to sort through their cultural inheritance and adopt traits as appropriate. They needed to belong to a group. The old family religion could serve where language and culture could not (1969,31).

There is much debate and discussion about the reality of such patterns in the American context (e.g Wuthnow and Christiano 1979, 260). Its application in Australia would require further research.

THE CHURCHES AND MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

There has been little research in Australia into the patterns of attendance of different ethnic groupings Surprisingly, Hans Mol did not deal with the subject in 'Religion in Australia' even though his survey apparently contained a question on the country of birth of respondents.

The large influx of migrants to this country since the Second World War has had a profound effect on religious life here It has increased the nominal Catholic population in Australia from 21 per cent in 1947 to 26 per cent in 1981 It is likely that at the next census the Catholic church will have become the largest religious grouping in the country.

The changes in the ethnic composition of Australia have affected the various denominations quite differently Charles Price suggests four different categories (1963, 193) First there are those English speaking churches that have been little affected by immigration Newcomers have been few in number and have come from very similar backgrounds to those already attending. He cites the Congregational churches as an example. Secondly there are those churches which have received moderate reinforcement from immigration, but in the main from English speaking countries where religious customs and conventions are similar He considers the Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches as examples of this Whilst some chaplaincy services are provided. the onus has generally been on the immigrant to enter a local congregation

The third category are those churches that have been predominantly English-speaking but with post war immigration have received considerable numbers of non English-speaking migrants The most obvious example of this is the Catholic church, having received many people from a range of ethnic backgounds The Lutheran church and the Presbyterian church (with its Dutch connections) are also in this category.

The final category of churches are those in which English speaking is minimal and where post war settlers make up the great bulk of membership Price cites some of the Orthodox churches as examples here as well as a range of sects Such groups face struggles of integration into the wider Australian church framework as well as how to deal with second and third generation ad herents

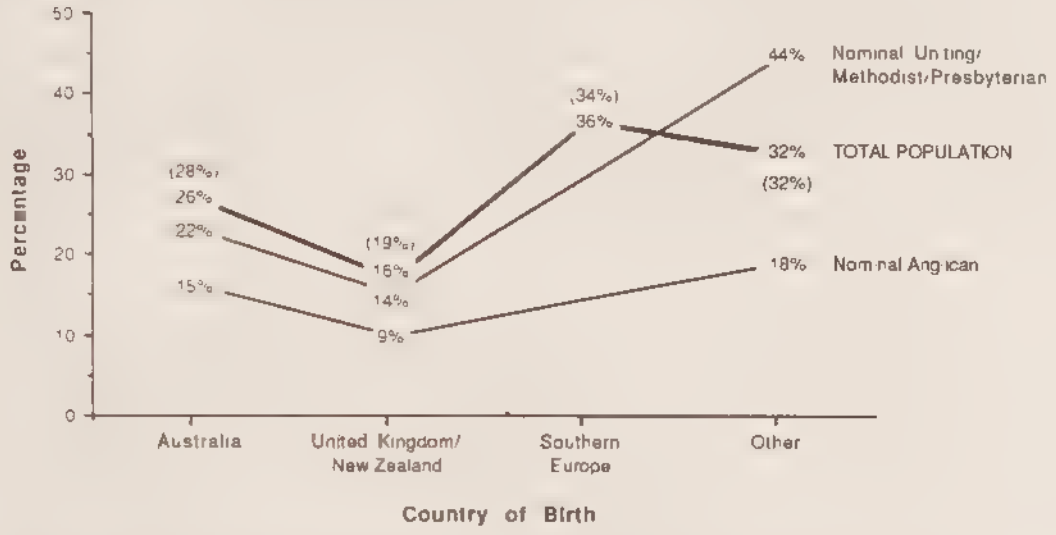
As we saw in chapter 2, patterns of post-war migration to this country have substantially altered the profile of religious adherence It has resulted in large increases in Catholic and Orthodox adherents.

With these thoughts in mind we turn to the 'Who Goes Where?' study. We are limited by the data available, particularly with regards to smaller ethnic groups We have more information on European than Asian and Pacific groups There is little hard data on Aboriginal church attendance. Neverthe less, there are important patterns that should be highlighted.

Church attendance rates vary greatly between different ethnic groupings The effect of country of birth on attendance in the survey data is shown below in figure 15.1 Those born in the United Kingdom or in New Zealand have much lower attendance rates than those born in Australia On the other hand, those born in Southern European countries such as Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia have much higher attendance rates This is also true amongst those born in other countries.

Figure 15.1 Country of Birth and Church Attendance (1983–4)

Percentage of Each Category Attending Church at Least Monthly



Note Anglican and Uniting/Methodist/Presbyterian samples had very few born in Southern Europe
Sources McNair Anderson and AVSS (figures in brackets are from the AVSS)

Those born in Southern European countries are also less likely to claim no religious affiliation at all In the McNair Anderson survey only 5 per cent did so, compared to twice as many Australian born and three times as many of those born in the United Kingdom or New Zealand or in 'other' countries

These patterns require further exploration To look in more detail we shall first examine patterns for the non Catholic denominations before turning our attention to Catholic mass attendance.

ETHNICITY AND PROTESTANT CHURCH ATTENDANCE — THE BROAD PICTURE

In our analysis of church attendance in different types of communities in part 2 we discovered that the ethnicity of an area had a strong impact on likely Pro-

testant attendance rates The higher the percentage of the community born overseas the lower the attendance rates. Protestant churches are best attended in communities which are mainly Anglo-Saxon in character. We also saw there that the lower attendance rates at churches in highly multicultural communities tended to reflect a lack of nominal adherents living in such areas

For churches in so many parts of our cities, the issues of multiculturalism are not theoretical As Ray Bakke has described it, they are faced with the *global* mission of the *local* church (1985) They are faced with a viability question *either to seek to be involved in ministry across the cultural* barriers within their own communities or else simply to maintain a service for those historically nominally affiliated to the denomination and face decline *and possible closure.*

This challenge is not one for which many Protestant denominations are well equipped Charles Wilcox comments that, whilst government policy has shifted from assimilation to multiculturalism, the thinking in many of our churches still seems to be back in the era of 'Anglo conformism' (1982, 23) Bishop John Reid of Sydney Diocese comments that 'the trouble is that the Anglican Church is a monocultural church in the midst of a multicultural nation, and this implies the need for very significant change' (Anglican Church 1985, 4) Jim Houston puts these realities in stark focus in the following comment:

> The Protestant churches must now be seen to be very much a sectional institution in Australian life, standing quite outside much of what is happening in our society. Although it still reflects the old white Anglo Saxon Protestant establishment, it seems to have limited appeal to vast sweeps of the broader population. Perhaps it is seen by many overseas-born Australians as just as truly an 'ethnic church' as Protestants see other churches to be. While lamenting the traditional Protestant 'imprisonment' in the middle class, we are perhaps now open to a new charge of being the archetypal middle-class church of the old ethnic Establishment (1979, 16).

From his study of Baptist churches in western Melbourne, Ross Langmead sees large barriers to migrant groups entering church life In his view the barriers are similar to those facing blue collar workers but there are added problems language, a loss of identity and a feeling of being 'different' in an otherwise culturally monochrome group (1978, 68).

Ethnicity and Protestant Church Attendance — Looking More Closely

The previous section has provided the overall context in which the Protestant churches operate Yet on its own it can mask some of the variety and colour that exists.

The distribution of nominal adherents at the 1981 census is shown in table 15 2 for NSW The predominantly Anglo-Saxon character of mainstream Protestant adherents is clearly evident Over 95 per cent of nominal adherents are Australian born, presenting a sharp contrast with the profiles of some of the other denominations.

In table 15 2 are listed the main ethnic groupings in each denomination Apart from people born in the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand, the

Table 15.2 Ethnic Distribution of Nominal Adherents in NSW (1981)

Denomination	*Percentage Born Overseas*	*Percentage Born in an English Speaking Country*	*Major Ethnic Groupings (as a Percentage of Overseas Born in each Denomination)*
Anglican	12%	98%	UK/Ire and 77% NZ 9% Indonesia 1% South Africa 1% India 1%
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	Italy 24% UK/Ire and 16% Yugoslavia 9% Malta 7% South America 6% Poland 4%
Uniting/Methodist/ Presbyterian	10%	97%	UK/Ireland 57% NZ 14% Netherlands 6% Germany 5% Oceania 3%
Baptist	14%	95%	UK/Ireland 52% NZ 8% South America 5% USA 4% Netherlands 3%
Lutheran	54%	48%	Germany 44% Estonia/ Latvia/Lithuania 21% Finland 10% USA 2%
Orthodox	61%	39%	Greece 42% Yugoslavia 23% Lebanon 11% Cyprus 6% Russian 4%

Source 1981 Census

mainline Protestant churches have adherents from the Netherlands (Uniting/ Presbyterian and Baptist), Germany and Oceania (Uniting Presbyterian) the USA and South America (Baptists) In table 15 3 is presented a denominational profile of some of the overseas born in the Australian population It

TABLE 15.3 DENOMINATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF OVERSEAS — BORN (1981)

DENOMINATION	*COUNTRY OF BIRTH*					
	UK/Ireland	*Italy*	*New Zealand*	*Yugoslavia*	*Greece*	*Germany*
Anglican	43%	—	25%	1%	—	6%
Catholic	14%	92%	15%	44%	1%	30%
Uniting/Methodist /Presbyterian	10%	—	13%	—	—	9%
Baptist	1%	—	1%	—	—	—
Lutheran	-	—	—	—	—	21%
Orthodox	—	—	—	41%	90%	2%
Other	32%	8%	46%	14%	9%	32%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Netherlands	*Poland*	*Lebanon*	*Vietnam*	*Oceania*	*China*
Anglican	5%	1%	—	—	10%	5%
Catholic	32%	71%	24%	13%	26%	7%
Uniting/Methodist /Presbyterian	13%	—	—	—	19%	3%
Baptist	1%	—	—	1%	—	1%
Lutheran	—	1%	—	—		
Orthodox	—	3%	31%	—	—	17%
Other	49%	24%	45%	86%	45%	67%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

illustrates the diversity of religious traditions that have come with multiculturalism

Unfortunately we have no complete data to assess the attendance rates at church amongst the above groups though it is clear that some are better attenders than others.

In a survey of Anglicans attending church in Melbourne in 1983, it was found that 77 per cent were Australian born Of the balance 64 per cent were born in Europe, 8 per cent in other parts of Europe, 15 per cent in Asia, 6 per cent in Oceania, 5 per cent in Africa and 2 per cent in the Americas.

A survey of Uniting church work amongst ethnic groups in Sydney revealed a wide range of activities and also many independent congregations making use of Uniting church property with differing levels of involvement with the parish The number of such congregations and estimates of attendance are shown in table 15.4.

The array of congregations operating is quite surprising. There would appear to be a rich tapestry of Christian life amongst some ethnic groupings,

at least in the main urban centres. Such ethnic churches are often in a much better position to become involved with people of similar backgrounds. At the same time such churches can face problems with succeeding generations — as we have already noted, subsequent generations may drift culturally away from the identity represented by an ethnic church. Furthermore, such churches face almost automatic decline if the flow of appropriate migrants to Australia declines.

Table 15.4 Ethnic Congregations Connected to the Uniting Church in Sydney, Canberra and Wollongong (1985)

Group	*Number of Congregations *1*	*Approximate Number of Attenders *2*	
Arabian	1	35	
Assyrian	2	800	
Chinese	3	625	
Dutch	3	85	
Fijian	2	300	
Greek	3	80	
Hungarian	1	150	
Indonesian	1	215	
International	1	300	
Italian	2	120	
Korean	7	1585	
Latvian	1	45	
Lebanese	1	25	
Macedonian	1	15	
Malaysian	1	35	
Polish	1	20	
Rotuman	1	50	
Samoan	4	220	
Serbo Croatian	1	70	
Spanish	5	220	NB Total Uniting
Sri Lankan	2	45	church attendance
Tamil	1	300	in these cities is
Tongan	15	1335	around 30,000
Vietnamese	2	100	people
Armenian	2	60	
	63	6890	

Notes

**1 This includes congregations formally affiliated to the Uniting church as well as independent congregations utilizing Uniting church property. The table is intended to be indicative of the range of groups that are operating*

**2 These are based on estimates provided by the pastor of the ethnic congregation or by the Uniting church minister in the parish. They are thus highly approximate and intended to be illustrative only*

**3 Of the 63 congregations 27 are formally linked to the Uniting church. A further 15 have social/religious contact with the local Uniting church parish. The remainder have only administrative contacts*

A look at church yearbooks suggests that the Baptists also have a range of ethnic churches. Charles Wilcox, from a study of ethnic churches, claims that amongst Protestants the Baptists have the most ethnic churches, followed by the Lutheran and Pentecostal churches (1982, 22). He suggests that the majority have come into being since the early 1960s from the work of a core of keen migrant Christians: 'While we would not want to minimise the importance of the labours and encouragement given to the ethnic churches by Australian Christians, the fact is that almost without exception, European and non European churches have their origins in a nuclei of immigrant Christians' (1979, 96). Such a core group therefore becomes a central priority in church development.

The relationships between ethnic churches and denominational bodies are many and varied. Some are formally linked as fully accredited congregations or parishes. Others are part of a wider parish. Some utilise denominational property whilst remaining independent, other ethnic groupings tend to simply participate in mainline churches without forming separate ethnic congregations. Wilcox claims that the higher the levels of education of those in an ethnic church and the higher the social status of the community in which it is placed, the more likely it is that the ethnic church will have close fellowship with a church of Australian-born (1979, 89). The challenge of involvement with ethnic communities in ways which enable such groups to develop yet demonstrate the essential unity of the church is the agenda for mainstream Protestant church life. For ethnic churches the challenge is to nurture their people yet remain linked to the flow of Australian life. The coming years will make for interesting observation for the Protestant churches in multicultural Australia these are critical times.

ETHNICITY AND CATHOLIC MASS ATTENDANCE

As has already been noted, it is the Catholic church that has been the most affected by the patterns of immigration since World War II. On the positive side it has been the denomination which has gained most numerically, at the same time it has had the burden of dealing with the dramatic influx. Several writers have suggested that the expansion placed such strains on the parish system that clergy were not well placed to cope. The problems were compounded by the fact that the new settlers brought with them a wide range of different understandings of Catholicism and church structures.

As Cyril Hally comments, the Catholic church is not a monolithic institution of uniform members. Rather it is made up of many different communities whose interests, aspirations and influence are never identical (1980, 16). The entry into the Australian scene of different types of Catholics came at a time, he suggests, when the Catholic community was developing an Australian ethos. The Catholic community had built a network of churches and institutions across the country serviced largely by Australian born clergy and religious orders. The burdens of enlarging the services of churches, schools and institutions was indeed an overwhelming one.

Other commentators have highlighted the difficulties faced by immigrant Catholics. Jean Martin suggests that religious leaders simply assumed that a common faith would automatically unite locals and newcomers (1972, 86). Unlike its American counterparts, the Catholic church sought to follow a policy of integration of migrants into existing Australian churches. With a few exceptions, ethnic parishes have not been allowed. Some of the available research suggests that some ethnic groups such as the Italians have resented the Irish Australian domination of the church. Martin argues that, in general, Australian Catholics were indifferent to the needs of those from Europe (1972, 96).

Patrick O Farrell argues that migrant groups were presumed to conform to what already existed, to adopt Australian religious ways and to drop their own (1977, 404). This was a particular struggle for Italian migrants who wished to keep their own forms of worship, saints' days, status and devotional habits. In consequence many deserted parish churches and mass attendance.

Conflict and antagonism have therefore sometimes characterised Anglo Italian relations within the Catholic parish.

Frank Lewins (1978) supports such a view:

> In theory, migrants in the Australian Catholic Church are all a part of the one Catholic Church united by their common faith. However, this is not the case. Ethnic diversity in the Australian Catholic Church, arising from the influx of over one million non-English speaking migrants has been a constant source of tension and conflict. This is largely because the Church's response to migrants has been more Australian than Catholic.

For Lewins, Australian Catholicism shows in graphic terms that culture divides more than religion unites. He argues that the primary concern of the bishops of the time was not primarily how to integrate the migrant into the existing system, but rather with the survival of the parish system itself (1977, 376).

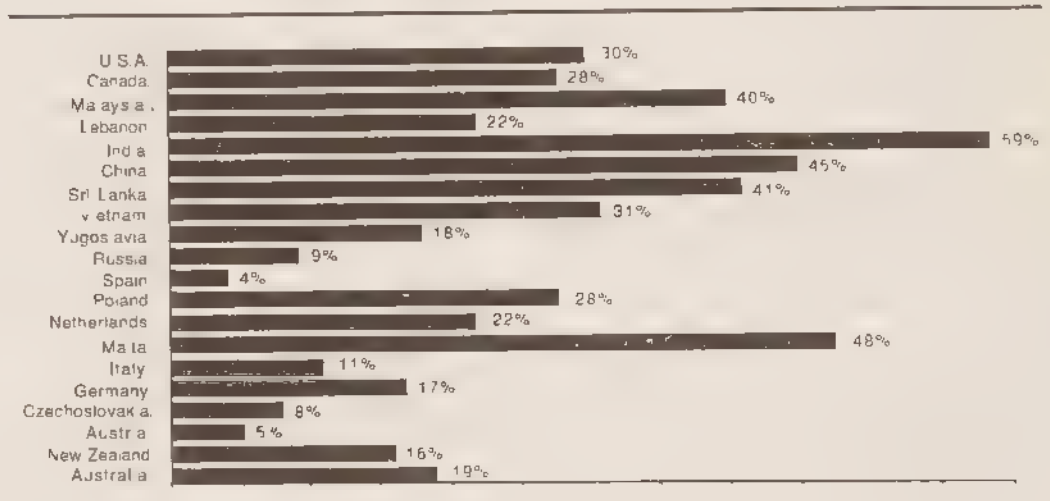
No doubt many of these propositions are open to debate and interpretation. It is important to highlight however the challenges posed to all parties by the influx of Catholic migrants over the last few decades. The discussion has also pointed up the need to examine the mass attendance rates of ethnic groups separately.

Various observers have commented on the differences in the rates of mass attendance of different ethnic groups. Cyril Hally for instance suggests that mass attendance is not as central for Southern Europeans as it is for those from Northern Europe (1982, 86).

As a test of the attendance at mass of different ethnic groups, the 'Who Goes Where?' study had access to a census of attenders at mass in the Western Region of Sydney in 1981. This census asked all those attending for their country of birth. Using the census data on the region the attendance rates of each ethnic group can be calculated. This is shown in table 15.5. Whilst it would clearly be dangerous to generalise from the results they do provide an

Table 15.5 Mass Attendance Rates of Different Ethnic

GROUPS IN WESTERN SYDNEY



Note: In each case an adjustment has been made for the percentage of each ethnic group who are nominally Catholic. This adjustment can only be approximate. The results in this table should be seen as illustrative only.
Source: Census of Catholic Mass Attenders in Western Sydney, 1981.

indication of the differences in attendance. It is important to note that table 15.5 is a measure of attendance rates of first generation immigrants.

The low levels of Italian mass attendance are quite evident in this table, as are those of several of the Eastern European nations. Catholics born in Poland provide an exception. The attendance rates of those born in Spain and Austria are low whilst Maltese attendance rates are very high.

The attendance rates of people born in various Asian countries appears to be significantly higher than their European counterparts. Indian, Chinese, Sri Lankan and Malaysian Catholics, in particular, appear to be very regular mass attenders. American and Canadian born Catholics are better attenders than their Australian or New Zealand born counterparts.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have examined a range of issues relating to multiculturalism and the churches. It is quite evident that multiculturalism is one of the key fac-

tors influencing and shaping Australian society and values. Such a process must invariably cause some unease in the wider community and in the churches, whose interests have tended to be connected to Anglo-Australians of British or Irish descent.

Such unease has tended to surface in communities where ethnic groups have concentrated and may appear to pose a threat to Anglo-Australian norms and values. In such circumstances an Anglo Australian church in an evermore multicultural community may well have an identity as set apart from (or against!) the wider community. Such an orientation is hardly conducive to building a wider support base amongst ethnic groups.

Religion can perform many functions for an ethnic community apart from its utility in a specifically religious sense. Many of these can be held together under the common theme of identity. This may be a difficult concept for many Australian readers who are accustomed to a society where overt religious practices and traditions are fairly marginal to life and where religion is a private and individual affair. In other cultures, however, religion can be a central core of national or regional identity. Our discussion of the difficulties faced by the Catholic church in relation to Italian migrants underlines the close connections between religion and identity.

Religion may still have significance and meaning then, even for some people who are far from regular church attenders. This has implications for church groups seeking to reach out to ethnic groups in their community of different nominal religious affiliation. *Even if the religious utility of their old religion has long since faded, there may still be massive pressures related to 'belonging' and 'identity' which make involvement in another church a very difficult act to contemplate.*

Of course, one must be cautious with generalisations. In some cases religion may have been a rallying point in the midst of oppression in the mother country. Poland comes to mind as an obvious example. In the new land such a group may take hold of religion as a source of identity and practice with increased fervour. In other cases, religion in the homeland may have been perceived as a part of the machinery of repression. Migration has been a drive to escape from the old, including the old religious ways. My father provides a case in point. Leaving a war and Nazi-ravaged European country he was very glad in Australia to become a Methodist so as to disassociate himself from what he saw as an oppressive Catholic church in his homeland.

It is quite likely that some of the variations in church participation of different ethnic groups are the result of the different ways that religion is related to culture and identity.

* * *

Multiculturalism presents a challenge to all churches. The challenge is to determine how to relate to the ethnic diversity that is increasingly the norm in Australia. How, as institutions, can they become open to the needs, experiences and ways of expressing faith that the different ethnic traditions bring with them? How do they build bridges across the cultural chasms that

separate them from an increasing proportion of Australia's population? How to turn diversity from being a threat to being an asset to be encouraged?

An obvious imperative is the *need to listen and to seek to understand the religious and denominational mindset of those ethnic Australians with whom they come in contact and its relation to their culture and sense of identity.* It would be an obvious first step in cross-cultural ministry overseas. It is no less important in the local context Given the importance in the formation of ethnic congregations of a committed core of ethnic people, *a second step for the churches must be the development of such a core group, whether the aim be an independent congregation or a group within an existing church.* A final prerequisite must be *a willingness to be themselves changed* An interaction between cultural goups has to be a two way process between two groups of people who, although culturally different, feel accepted and valued

There can be no doubt that such processes involve high levels of commitment and risk. Yet, as this chapter has shown, the task is of great importance.

The struggles of churches in highly multicultural areas as they grapple with these issues are likely to provide important insights for churches in all areas.

PART 4

Conclusions

16

UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS HAPPENING AROUND US

This is the first of two chapters bringing together the results and implications of the 'Who Goes Where?' study. In this chapter are outlined some of the patterns of church attendance observed in the study and how they have come about.

In the preface to this study, the stated aim of the research was to provide a profile of church attendance in Australia in the 1980s, to determine the underlying factors at work creating such patterns and to compare attendance patterns with those for other aspects of religious orientation. What conclusions can we draw?

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN CHURCHES AND SOCIETY

According to sample surveys around one third of Australians claim to attend church at least monthly. Data collected from clergy suggest that this is a highly optimistic assessment. Even accepting the optimistic results of the sample surveys, we find that around half the Australian population have not attended church for over a year. The churches face significant issues of communication

in this society in which the majority of people have no direct contact with church life.

In a previous chapter I described the church noticeboard on a main road in Sydney which had generated a rival noticeboard in a pub across the road. As I write the church board bears the message 'Jesus gave his life for you. Shown any interest in him ?' To someone well removed from the churches' lives and teachings, what might this mean? Many people have given their lives for others in war and in other ways. How should they respond? How do they show an interest? The response from the pub is much easier to comprehend: 'Show an interest: invest in a cool beer from here'!

Because of the gaps between churches and community, Christians are faced with the task of presenting their message in ways clear enough to be understood. Bruce Dutton, from Fusion Australia, uses the following illustration. If one were to ask a sample of Australians what they thought a Christian was, one might expect to find answers such as these featuring quite prominently:

- someone who goes to church
- someone who is intelligent or well-behaved
- someone who is well-dressed
- someone who doesn't drink or smoke or have sex
- someone who is good
- someone something like Billy Graham

Few church people would be satisfied with these definitions!

Ronald Conway suggests that a real communication problem exists for the churches. He sees massive ignorance of what is going on in the churches and believes that people are making 1980s judgments based on 1950s information (1985, 39).

CHURCH ATTENDANCE IN DIFFERENT SOCIAL CONTEXTS

Quite clearly the churches as institutions function much better in certain kinds of communities than in others. For all denominations nominal adherents are more likely to attend church in certain types of communities than others. Attendance rates are likely to be highest in older, stable suburbs or small towns, with low population mobility, which are predominantly white collar communities and with few people born overseas. This pattern is more marked amongst Protestant churches although there is also evidence of it in the patterns of Catholic mass attendance.

The 'Who Goes Where?' study underlines *the importance of congregations and planners really understanding the context in which they seek to minister.* It is not good enough to simply assume that models of ministry appropriate in one context are applicable to all other situations. Understanding the social context in which a particular church finds itself is essential if the congregation and clergy are not to have unreal expectations and, more

importantly, if a church is to develop appropriate modes of involvement and interaction with the community. Some reflections on these issues have been made in chapter 8 and do not need to be repeated here.

HOW WE HAVE ARRIVED WHERE WE ARE

At different stages in this study we have outlined a range of patterns of attendance and have drawn on sociological and historical material to look for explanations. It is important for us here to draw these threads together.

Australia began not as a Christian mission but as a gaol. No Pilgrim Fathers as in America, but a military officer, some troops and a collection of convicts. Not a Christian utopia but a purgatory. Religion was not an agent of freedom but part of the machinery for social control. Religion buttressed a belief in the superiority of British life, values and morals.

From the outset Australia has been a multicultural and multi faith society. The Presbyterian church reflected Scottish loyalties. The story of Catholicism in nineteenth century Australia is the story of an oppressed ethnic minority struggling for an identity and acceptance in an alien country. As towns developed churches were erected alongside the civic buildings. Within the community churches had an important function in education and socialisation, teaching children the core values for living. They also had a role in providing a social outlet and a place where ethnic and kinship ties could be strengthened. The churches all consciously modelled on their homeland counterparts and imported leadership from them until comparatively very recent times.

There can be little surprise in hindsight, that the processes of forging a national identity and cohesiveness have reduced the influence of religion and the churches in Australia. Cohesiveness required the accommodation of all faiths. Accommodation has gradually reduced their social role in Australian life.

The advent of television and mass communications on one hand and increased mobility on the other have no doubt helped accelerate this process reducing the importance of churches as entertainment and social outlets in the local community. In losing some of these social functions the churches have lost one of their main sources of recruitment.

Deeply Entrenched Patterns

Deeply entrenched over a long period of time have been gender, life stage and socio-economic differences in church attendance.

Women are more regular attenders than men across all the major denominational groupings and such a pattern has existed through most of the post-war period and possibly well beyond.

Some aspects of this pattern may be changing. It is possible that women are adjusting their attendance rates down towards those of men. Gender

differences in church attendance are more pronounced amongst older Australians Further, it appears that women who work full time have similar attendance rates to men Given the increasing participation of women in the workforce, this has serious implications for the churches How should they relate to the community of full-time workers, male and female?

Identified here is one of the mechanisms whereby overall patterns of attendance may change Further research is required to ascertain how the process occurs are the lower levels of attendance of full-time workers simply due to time constraints on workers or are they the result of alternative value orientations in the workplace?

A second entrenched pattern appears to be related to the role of the churches in the education and upbringing of children We noted in the last section the churches' historical emphasis in this area. Those families with children aged over five years are more likely to attend church than others A life cycle pattern can be drawn that suggests that children are likely to be encouraged to attend church, dropping out as they become young adults, presumably because at that stage in their lives the faith of their childhood has little to offer them. As they marry and have children they are likely to desire to give their children a religious upbringing

The churches are seen to celebrate family life. This study reveals that those who have experienced family instability (e.g. separation, divorce, remarriage) are less likely to attend church Perhaps the churches have been seen as judgmental, possibly people have left as they found church teachings did not fit with the realities of their own life experiences Or maybe it is even simpler, that in their life and activities the churches are so geared to children and complete families that others feel excluded.

Again, we have isolated a specific mechanism through which attendance levels may change, further research is required to better understand the process The churches doubtless feel the need to affirm the family and there is a range of evidence including that from the current work of the Christian Research Association (1986) that the family is a major focus of Australian life However, it is important that the churches seek to minister to those in different or incomplete family units.

Alongside gender and life stage differences, historical sources suggest that socio-economic status differences in attendance rates have formed a backdrop to church life throughout the period of white settlement in Australia. Those of higher socio-economic status are better attenders in all the major denominations As we saw in chapter 11, in their relations to the state and in the backgrounds and attitudes of their members and leadership, the churches have had an orientation that has been more conducive to involvement by those of higher status and with high levels of education Those whose interests were not aligned with the status quo, who did not see themselves as 'respectable' or who felt uncomfortable with the life and style of the churches tended to stay well clear of active church life This is a pattern well entrenched in Australia and Britain, particularly in Protestant traditions

In chapter 11 we also saw that the form and nature of church life was likely to be more attractive to those with higher levels of education. Such people are better able to participate in formal organizations. Church emphasis on abstract teaching and doctrine rather than on concrete and experiential issues of faith may also contribute to the existing patterns of attendance.

At the same time this pattern is not duplicated in all other aspects of religious orientation. Indeed the AVSS data presented here suggests that, all other factors being equal, those of lower socio economic status are more likely to hold orthodox Christian beliefs. The challenge for the churches from this is twofold. First, for those with higher levels of education, who are the dominant membership of many churches, the challenge is to present a clear and coherent set of beliefs that measure up to the scrutiny that education is likely to bring to bear on them. Secondly, the churches need to seek ways in which those who believe but do not attend can grow and give expression to their beliefs. Australia has not got the colourful church life amongst lower socio-economic status groups that typifies American church life, particularly amongst black and Hispanic groups.

Here again is an important factor that has shaped church attendance patterns in this country. Whilst for the churches it may require a large slice of self examination and risk taking there is no rule to say that the socio-economic patterns of church attendance in this country or in Britain are absolute and unchangeable.

More Recent Trends

The twentieth century has not been an easy time for the Australian churches. In an unstable world, they have been for some the only certain points around which to orientate their lives. In a rapidly changing world, the churches have often been a place of retreat. In many ways they have appeared to react against change and to represent a previous era.

This study has highlighted two major trends in church attendance that have emerged over the last forty years. First, in the post war period, church life has been dramatically altered by the large scale immigration to Australia of people from non English speaking countries, resulting in large increases in the Catholic and Orthodox populations, as well as people with non-Christian religions. The process has had different effects on the denominations.

For the Catholic church, the challenge has been how to cope with increased demands and how to work with the different understandings of Catholicism that the various ethnic groups have brought with them. The rates of attendance at mass of different ethnic groups vary considerably. Some writers have suggested that, in the face of such cultural diversification, many in the church have sought to preserve their essentially Irish nature. The agenda for Catholicism must include a reflection on the relationship between formal church organisations and the varied ethnic communities.

For most of the Protestant churches the agenda is quite different. Most denominations are largely Anglo Saxon in origin. In highly multicultural communities many congregations must either take seriously an involvement with the various ethnic groups, many of whom have no contact with any churches, or else retreat into their Anglo Saxon identity and face the prospect of decline. The growing number of ethnic churches, particularly in urban areas, is adding to the colour of church life in Australia. For the mainline churches the question is how to have meaningful relationships with these churches, encouraging their growth without stifling them.

The second major trend in the post-war era is found in the decline in church involvement of those born since World War II. Churches fashioned by and reflecting the needs of a previous generation were ill equipped to respond to the needs and life experiences of those growing up and being formed by the turbulent era of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many younger people simply moved out of church life, disclaiming all denominational loyalties. Others looked towards other religions, meditation or mysticism for religious fulfillment. Still others transferred their allegiance to other churches. The charismatic movement constantly challenges mainline churches with the latter's inability to hold their younger people.

Missionary Frontiers In Twentieth-Century Australia

In many ways church life in Australia has become culturally bound to certain types of groups and communities. There are large chasms that separate the church and its message on the one side and many segments of our society on the other. To put it into the language of traditional Christian missionary work, there are many 'missionary frontiers' in our own backyards. These are not new but are deep and entrenched and require the churches to look carefully at what they do and why. This is particularly true in areas that have been described as 'difficult' types of communities in this study. However in all areas there are many cultural groups well distanced from the life of the churches. As was noted in chapter 8 the lessons to be learned about ministry in 'difficult' communities are likely to have far wider application.

FURTHER INSIGHTS FROM THE 'WHO GOES WHERE?' STUDY

The picture painted by Hans Mol of the church in Australia was one of a set of institutions changing only slowly. Twenty years on we see the churches as social organisations in a time of transition in a society that is itself evolving. The declines in the levels of attendance of young adults, changing patterns of workforce participation, multicultural Australia, increased mobility and its impact on local communities are all shaping and affecting the life of the churches. Within churches the charismatic movement and the growth of

Pentecostalism is making many profound changes Whatever the nature of church life twenty years ago, today it can hardly be described as static

In the opening chapter it was argued that certain issues needed to be borne in mind in framing a study of church attendance in Australia Let us now return to each of these and review what has been learnt.

Exploring Denominational Differences

The religious denomination to which one belongs provides a context and tradition for the expression of one's religious experiences The results of this study show both similarities and differences amongst denominational groups It is quite evident that factors such as gender, age and socio economic status affect all mainline denominations However, there are differences Residential mobility appears to affect attendance at mass more than it does non-Catholic church going The issues faced by the churches related to multiculturalism are quite different The growth of some of the 'Other Christian' churches is contrasted with the lack of growth in real terms in mainline denominations

Let us look briefly at the situation of each major group of churches.

The *Anglican and mainline Protestant churches* clearly face significant challenges in looking to the future Changing migration patterns have reduced their nominal base in Australia, they have experienced declines in attendance levels over the past thirty years, plateauing out in the 1980s at a lower overall level than was the case in the 1950s and early 1960s Perhaps the most worrying aspect for this group of churches is the age profile of their regular attenders Projecting forward, such profiles suggest the likelihood of further declines That there are significant drifts of younger attenders in these denominations to charismatic and Pentecostal churches reinforces such concerns.

It is imperative for these denominations to reach out beyond their active constituency to those who are not currently regular attenders To rely purely on biological and transfer growth is a recipe for further decline This study has suggested these churches represent certain cultural interests To remain captive to those interests will remove possibilities for growth

We will look in the following chapter at some of the issues related to bridging cultures It should be said here, though that there is evidence of churches within these traditions seeking to develop new and more appropriate models of ministry in a range of different ways including regional ministries, new forms of community outreach ethnic ministries and different models of being the church Time will tell whether they are but fringe activities or have a lasting impact.

Many of these patterns of church attendance are common to the *Catholic church* as well Certain groups within the community are more likely to produce regular attenders than others The attendance levels have also declined in the period since 1960 These patterns and changes have been largely masked by two factors. First, in comparison to other mainline

denominations, attendance levels were higher to begin with. Secondly, and most importantly, migration and possibly birthrate patterns have provided the Catholic church with an ever-larger base of nominal adherents from which to draw.

The Catholic church faces specific issues related to the cultural and ethnic diversity of adherents as well as problems of leakage from active attendance of the residentially mobile.

So, while the Catholic church is institutionally more secure than other mainline denominations, it needs to look closely at who are actively involved in the churches and who choose not to attend.

The smaller denominational groups reveal amazing diversity. The last twenty years have seen the proliferation and growth of many of these groups and there is a greater diversity in Australian life today as a result. Some of the *smaller Protestant churches* appear to have maintained their position more effectively than the mainline denominations. Whether this is due to their more conservative and clear cut doctrinal orientation as theories like that of Kelley might suggest, remains an open question.

Nevertheless, within their life is evident the same general patterns of church attendance as those of the larger non Catholic churches. Most tend to be stronger in the same types of areas although there are exceptions as we saw in chapter 6 in the case of the Salvation Army.

The *Pentecostal and charismatic churches* have grown at a dramatic rate over the last decade attracting younger adults both from mainstream churches and from outside of church life altogether. Whilst there will be many challenges for these churches in managing and maintaining their momentum, it is likely that the upheaval in church life due to this movement is by no means past its peak.

The potential transfer of many younger people from mainstream to Pentecostal churches raises the wider issue of denominational transfer. There is considerable speculation that for younger people denominational affiliation holds less meaning than for previous generations. Some would suggest, for example, that active Protestant church attenders are more likely to choose their church according to criteria such as quality of fellowship, programmes available, friendliness of congregation or correctness of teaching rather than through denominational loyalty. A study of people switching denominations would provide a whole range of useful insights.

Finally, one must note the range of predominantly *ethnic churches* that have been developing in this country. They are apparently growing in size and number both within and outside the existing denominations. As a result of the commitment and dedication of small groups of ethnic Christians, these churches are raising a very healthy range of questions for all the churches.

The importance of examining denominational groupings separately has been well underlined in this discussion. It must be a central conclusion of this study that more research needs to be carried out amongst those Christian groups usually identified as 'Other Christian', particularly the Pentecostal and ethnic churches.

Church Attendance and Other Aspects of Religious Orientation

To examine religion in Australia must involve looking at practices, beliefs and experiences of the supernatural as related although somewhat distinct aspects of religious orientation. Patterns of belief or experience of the supernatural do not always follow those for church attendance. The patterns of church attendance as it relates to the number of children in a household are not mirrored in other aspects of religious orientation. After controlling for other effects, those with higher levels of education, whilst more likely to attend regularly, are less likely to accept orthodox Christian beliefs. On the other hand age and gender differences would appear to exist across all aspects of religious orientation.

There can be little doubt then of the importance of looking at church attendance as but one aspect of religious orientation. This can have important implications for the churches in planning and evaluating priorities. It can also be important as they look at their models for church life and ministry. A central conclusion of this study is that patterns of church attendance reflect quite closely patterns of involvement in other local organisations, particularly those that are more formally organised. On this basis it can be argued that attendance patterns reflect, to some degree at least, patterns of institutional involvement in general as much as the overall religious orientation of different groups in the population.

One can ask whether the churches should also operate in other less formal styles, a point to which we shall return in the following chapter.

Beyond Sample Survey Data

The value of the church and census data in part 2 has amply justified the decision in this study to move beyond sample survey data. Its use to study area effects has also been important.

The discrepancy between sample survey and church estimates of attendance is disturbing and invites further research. It is quite likely that, due to desirability bias, sample surveys overstate attendance rates, a fact that will not create much joy for the churches.

Despite this discrepancy, one should not reject either source of data. Whilst there is a difference in the overall levels of attendance, the patterns of attendance in relation to the social profile predictors, detailed in part 2, are complementary to the sample survey results in part 3. Together they provide a more complete and realistic picture than could either source of data on its own.

Taking Seriously the Nature of the Community

In chapter 1 it was suggested that church attendance needed to be considered as more than an individual preference. Attendance is participation in a group

activity and therefore is, in part, an expression of cultural identification with that group.

Examination of patterns of attendance on an area by area basis, as was carried out in part 2 of this study, suggests strongly that attendance levels will vary greatly between different types of communities. Both the McNair-Anderson and AVSS samples suggest that, to some degree, the nature of an area will affect levels of church attendance beyond the individual characteristics of respondents. Put simply, the likely attendance rates of two identical individuals may be somewhat different if they live in different types of communities.

Thus we can conclude that the nature of the social environment — local cultures, values and attitudes on one hand and availability of church resources on the other — may exert an impact on likely attendance rates, pointing up the need for further research, perhaps best done using a case study approach.

The Grand Theories

In chapter 4, various explanations of changes in church attendance over the last thirty years were outlined. From our examination of church attendance at the local level what comments can we now make about the grand theories?

Firstly to the need for an *Australian form of Christianity*. Many writers have lamented the fact that the churches have not been Australian enough and have argued the need to immerse the churches in Australian culture. This study would seem to push these discussions one step further. Rather than simplistically talking about one Australian culture it highlights the need for churches to take seriously the *many* cultures and cultural groups that they encounter in their local communities. In all likelihood it would result in a far wider range of styles of church life and ministry than at present exist.

The *secularisation theory* of church decline has had its fervent proponents and fierce opponents. Whilst there may be a case to be made that many Australians are adopting a more secular view of the world, these theories are flawed by the scale of generalisations. They leave a picture of an all pervading and unrelenting force against which it is almost pointless to struggle. How does a local church programme to counter secularisation?

This study suggests several specific areas where church decline has been most evident. It therefore locates some areas where perhaps forces of secularization could be seen to be most potent. In the explanations suggested for each factor we have sought to show in reasonably concrete terms why decline has occurred and issues the churches need to counter as they seek to respond.

If the secularization debate has generated some heat it is nothing compared to that created by the *Church Growth movement*! It is this writer's perception that much of the controversy is the result of over reaction on all sides.

This study impinges at many points on Church Growth movement theory. In places we have made use of Church Growth models in framing the

study and in suggesting explanations for what has been observed In other places we have sought to improve these models, a case in point being the distinction between 'internal' and 'external' factors This is an issue to be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter where we suggest that it is a simplistic and inadequate model and that these factors are highly inter-related

This writer believes the Church Growth movement has done great service to the churches in providing tools for analysis of church life. They are tools, not an end in themselves, they need to be used with a clear understanding of contextual factors and adapted to each specific cultural context There is nothing controversial in such a statement and it is one with which most leading proponents of the movement would probably concur The movement does itself damage however when it disregards these issues and focusses on success stories of churches planted in highly fertile soil It is my hope that this study can generate some creative case study research on church planting and development in each of the social contexts outlined in part 2 and with the various social groups whose attendance patterns have been reviewed at the start of this Chapter.

Dean Kelley's thesis about *the growth of churches of conservative theological orientation* must still remain an interesting but unproven speculation, at least in the Australian context This study suggests that some of the 'Other Christian churches appear to have maintained their membership levels more effectively than some of the more liberal mainline traditions. Pentecostal growth also comes into this category There may be many reasons for these patterns and more detailed analysis of those who flow in and out of these churches would be required What we can suggest is that in times such as these it is essential for churches to look clearly at what it is they feel they have to offer to the wider society and to provide it in a clear-cut manner.

* * *

In chapter 4 it was argued that a more helpful understanding of church attendance patterns could be gained from developing a model of the interaction between church and society at a local level In the following chapter we look at that model in more detail and, in the process, the implications of this study for the local church.

17

THE LOCAL CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY

An understanding of the churches in Australian society must focus on the interaction between the church and the community. The nature of this interaction and therefore likely church attendance levels will depend both on the receptivity of the community and the openness of the churches. External factors and those internal to the life of the churches are not only important but are quite inter-related.

This chapter also spells out some of the challenges facing the churches in Australian society. It suggests the importance of developing a range of new models of ministry more in keeping with the reality and diversity of contemporary life. The patterns outlined in this study are in many cases deeply entrenched; that does not however mean they are unalterable.

In chapter 4, a model of the interaction between church and community was developed. Here we look at what this study can contribute to our understanding of this interaction and some of its implications for the churches.

The Receptivity of the Local Community

It is in the midst of the shifting and diverse web that is modern society that the churches seek to operate We can conclude from this study that *any explanation of patterns of church attendance that neglects the impact of community and culture is likely to be overly simplistic For the churches this study underlines the importance of taking into account local context and cultures as they develop their ministry Different types of communities have different levels of RECEPTIVITY.*

In the model of the interaction between church and community outlined in chapter 4, we talked of the receptivity of a community both in terms of its *overall religious orientation and* in its orientation *to the churches as social or ganisations* Some of the patterns of church attendance outlined in this study have as much to do with the nature of the churches as social organisations as they are to do with religious beliefs and orientation.

The receptivity of a community can shift in several ways At a wider level it can be affected by shifts that take place across an entire society Some of the changes in attendance levels in the 1960s and 1970s, relating to the cultural shifts of the period, provide a good example of this Secondly, it is influenced by the different levels of receptivity of different groups who make up a community, either due to a perception that the churches are not relevant to them, or are not representing their cultural and social interests The attitudes of many in the blue collar communities provide an illustration, as do some ethnic groups in relation to Catholic mass attendance. Finally there can also be local variations in receptivity related to the specific local church (and the other churches in the region) Previous experiences can raise or lower a community s receptivity reinforcing or overcoming past attitudes The nature of church life at a local level can affect receptivity.

So What about 'Internal' Factors?

In chapter 4 various factors affecting local church life were noted. Some of these were wider denominational factors - denominational traditions, theological orientations, training of leadership and the social make up of its active constuency The 'lifestage' of the denomination was also seen to be important, since it is likely to affect the nature of its organisation, enthusiasm and degree of flexibility

More local factors were also suggested As at the wider level, the local traditions, theological orientations, nature of leadership and the social profile of local church attenders are likely to affect the nature of church life and its interaction with the community around it.

If we can talk about the receptivity of a local community we can also talk of the OPENNESS OF A LOCAL CHURCH TO ITS COMMUNITY The Church Growth movement has developed a range of principles for church life that they claim will maximise growth possibilities.

'Internal' or 'External' Factors: Which Are More Important?

As the internal/external distinction was introduced in chapter 1, it was noted that there has been considerable debate on which of these had the greater impact on church growth or decline. Some, including Hoge and Roozen (1979, 326) have suggested that local external factors are more important. Others, such as Kelley (1977), Wagner (1979, 275) and the Church Growth movement suggest internal factors are more important. From their investigation of patterns of church-going in Britain since 1700, Currie, Gilbert and Horsley conclude that external factors have been more influential (1977, 1).

Discussion has also been clouded by over-reaction on all sides. As was noted in chapter 4, the Church Growth movement in part arose as a reaction against the pessimistic and somewhat deterministic standpoints of the 1960s which saw the churches as doomed with no way of escape.

The strength of feeling on both sides has meant that the impression is often created that any analysis of the church's place in society is fundamentally in opposition to examination of internal factors and vice versa. This certainly need not be the case. *The 'Who Goes Where?' study is not based on a premise that the patterns which emerge are unalterable nor that 'internal' factors are irrelevant to the future growth or decline of a church.*

Certainly a reading of much Church Growth literature reveals a concern for the context of ministry. Peter Wagner, for instance, talks about the importance of understanding the nature of the soil in which the seed is to be planted (1978, 65). The Australian writers all talk about the differences in the social context in Australia and the USA. Moyes argues that it is imperative that church leadership be in touch with people not involved in church life (1975, 32). Hillman devotes considerable space to the importance of understanding the local context (1981, 46) and of building bridges between church and community (1981, 57).

The Church Growth movement must therefore be understood as an attempt to assist the churches to maximise their impact within a given social context. Ongoing discussion and debate must take place within such a framework. The place of a study such as this is to ensure that discussion about church life can take place with a clear picture of the situation in which the churches find themselves.

TOWARD A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCHES AND SOCIETY

It would seem to this writer that not only is the debate about the relative importance of 'external' and 'internal' factors fuelled by over-reaction, but that the typology itself is somewhat suspect and simplistic.

'Internal' and 'external' factors are not distinct and unrelated to each other. A local community can have its general attitudes to the churches significantly altered, positively or negatively, by the local churches in their area. Likewise, a

church may alter its models of ministry and styles of church life as it grows to better understand those in its community.

There are important inter relationships between 'internal' and 'external' factors that can deeply affect church life The nature of the membership of a church, both locally and at a wider level, over a period of time, will influence the types of people who are likely to come into its leadership and therefore the models of church life which come to be developed Particular forms of church life will, in turn, influence the types of people who become members of the church and so on.

At a deeper level, policy, both practical and doctrinal, is developed by pastors, bureaucrats, or theologians from within the values, traditions and cultures of their social context Their experiences can often act as blinkers to the values, traditions and cultures of other groups in our increasingly complex society.

Thus church doctrine orientation and practice are likely, over time, to enshrine the cultural values and traditions of those who comprise their membership and particularly of those who are in positions of power and influence within the organisations As an illustration, we have observed in this study that the lack of influence of younger people in the life of the church meant that, in the 1960s, the churches found the emerging youth culture very difficult to come to terms with Again, the long term estrangement of working-class culture from the Protestant churches in Britain and Australia has had profound ramifications on the social and theological attitudes of these churches.

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

It was because of this inter-relationship between 'internal' and 'external' factors that, in chapter 4, it was suggested that the fundamental focus for analysis of church attendance patterns must be the interaction between church and community In the model developed there it was argued that church and community factors, both local and more widespread in nature, interact in many ways to generate a **receptivity** level in the local community and a level of **openness** within the churches Together these levels create a **degree of connectedness** between a local church and the community of which it is a part.

In chapter 4 was also outlined the distinction made in Church Growth literature between biological, transfer and conversion growth and it was suggested that conversion growth provides a measure of the degree of connectedness of a church to its local community A further critical measure suggested by this study is a comparison of the social profile of church attenders in a particular community with that of the community at large

A look at the profiles of many churches suggests that congregations are very often not representative of the communities of which they are part An aging congregation will find it much harder to attract the younger people in their area; a church dominated by school teachers and service professionals in

a blue collar housing estate will have difficulties in reaching and including local people in its life It is very easy for such churches to become CLOSED SYSTEMS, with little connectedness between church and community. Dean Drayton (1984) describes Protestant congregations that are aging and whose model for ministry is focused entirely on biological growth as being locked into what he terms the death cycle of congregations In our first example, the church will die as aging reduces attendance, in the second the church is likely either to face an extremely limited future or else grow by tapping into a regional network of professionals.

Churches which are representative of the communities in which they are a part and into which there is a flow of people without backgrounds in church attendance are much more likely to be **open systems**, capable of growing and developing.

THE LIFESTAGES OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

As social institutions the churches experience the stresses that affect other institutions A number of writers have reflected on the various lifestages of institutions One rather colloquial version suggests that institutions move through four stages 'man, movement machine, monument' The first stage emphasizes the role of a visionary or ideas person His or her insights and dreams tend to attract others because he she has interpreted and helped them understand their own hopes and visions What is created is a ***movement***

A ***movement*** is flexible Its boundaries are often unclear It is a coalition held together with more or less ease by the common vision. It seeks to put its ideas into practice. This is often done with many rough edges glossed over in the enthusiasm to get on with the job.

As a movement determines its direction and develops solidarity it can tend to become a ***machine*** Well structured, well oiled, it functions smoothly There is room for people to contribute and belong.

A good machine can be very efficient The danger for a machine however is that it is no longer as adaptable as a movement In changing circumstances — and aren't all circumstances changing there is a danger that the machine becomes obsolete Everybody is still doing their bit without ascertaining whether the end product is of value In such a case there is a grave danger of a ***machine*** becoming a ***monument***.

Monuments have their place in the realm of the past They are useful as part of a tradition and as a yardstick by which to discern direction for the future. Yet their time has past.

Various researchers have noted this sort of pattern in church life Church statistics in the British Isles over several centuries have revealed such trends (Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, 1977) as has contemporary analysis from the Church Growth movement (McGavran 1970).

If institutional life tends to follow such a natural flow, then problems are likely to arise as people try to alter this flow to turn ***monuments*** back into ***movements***, or to allow a ***movement*** to affect and alter the course of a

machine. Then there can be trouble. Situations that have been comfortable for people are under threat. They are being asked to swap the comfort of the known present for an unknown future. Stable niches start to look less secure. Such transitions are very difficult. Any institution will have a tendency towards pattern maintenance and preservation of traditions and identity.

On this basis one could expect that the emergence of new models of church practice will not occur without opposition, difficulty or even hurt. A large amount of patience and care will be required of those seeking change alongside an openness from those currently within the life of the churches.

This study has suggested that the charismatic movement is emerging both within and outside the life of the existing churches. It has been growth that has often been marked by hurts and pain for those both inside and outside the movement. The existing patterns of church attendance are not unchangeable, yet, by the same token, such change is likely to be far from plain sailing.

The lifestages of social institutions should provide warnings to the Pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement. The institutionalisation of religious movements has often signalled a slow-down in church growth. These churches need to give careful thought to how they manage and organise their churches without stifling their development.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES

In 1980 a book on church life was published bearing the title *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*. An interpretation of a biblical phrase, it is also the title given by Richard Broome to his study of the churches in Australia at the turn of the century. In that work he describes the struggle of the churches of the era which, with the best of intentions, were limited by the cultural values of their membership. What was true at the turn of the century is still true today. At any place and at any time Christians give expression to their faith and their heritage. In doing so they will seek to depend on God for strength and guidance. Yet the institutions they create will always be human institutions with all the strengths and weaknesses that entails. In the words of sociologist Thomas O'Dea, religion both needs most and suffers most from institutionalisation (1961, 32).

Apart from its value to social scientists it is important for those in the churches to recognize both the strengths and weakness of these institutions if they are to more fully respond to the community in which they find themselves. It is my hope that this study will be of assistance to churches in planning and in developing their priorities.

In chapter 8 it was suggested that many of the traditions of church life and practice were derived from, and most applicable to, stable 'village' communities with small and unchanging populations where church attendance had a clear and important social role. Relatively few communities in contemporary Australia match this description.

It is surprising to see the lack of diversity in church life. Whilst this study has noted increasing diversity on the fringes of church life, it is nevertheless

true that amongst mainline denominations there is an amazing similarity in the models of ministry applied to all social contexts It would seem the churches have a lot of reflecting to do to ensure their ministries are well adapted to contemporary Australian life.

The patterns revealed in this study suggest some areas of church life in need of attention:.

Beyond Children. Traditional models of church practice have focused overwhelmingly on children This may be necessary, but it is not sufficient if the churches are to move beyond the existing patterns of attendance As has been seen the churches face high drop-out rates among young adults It is clearly essential, both for the retention of membership as well as for the extension of church influence, to assist people to develop a faith and involvement that is appropriate also to the needs of adults.

Regional Ministries: Alongside work in local communities churches may be well advised to consider developing more regional ministries focused on particular social groups Ethnic ministries provide an obvious example. But there can be other groups amongst whom regional ministries may be more appropriate Some groups within modern society have little attachment to the local community The growth of some university churches and the Pentecostal mega churches suggests that young adults may well be a group more amenable to regional ministries Such ministries would be well placed in 'transient' communities, as described in chapter 5, which contain higher percentages of people with little local community attachment.

More Informal Styles of Church Life: As we have seen in several chapters of this study, patterns of church attendance bear a similarity to patterns of involvement with other formal associations In chapter 11, for example, it was argued that those with less formal education are likely to be less comfortable in formal organizations A question this should pose for the churches is, if certain groups of people tend not to be involved with formal associations, should not church life take forms other than as formal associations?

We do see new models of church life developing The emphasis on small group life, house fellowships and the like both in mainstream denominations and within charismatic and Pentecostal churches provide further options for ministry to the diverse groups in our communities.

Many of the newer models of church practice represent a range of attempts to provide both *solidarity* and *intimacy* for Christians in an everchanging and indifferent world In some cases these developing models represent attempts to get *alongside* people, meeting them at their points of concern and need They stand in contrast to more traditional models of church life.

Bridging the Gaps between Church and Community

Several years ago I used historical sources to examine the relationship between the Protestant churches and the urban working class at different

stages in the development of this country. The title of the publication was *A Gulf Too Deep?* It summed up the situation as I saw it. There was a large credibility gap for churches in their efforts to reach that particular social group.

Whilst the gulf had been enduring, the question mark in the title reflected a sense that it was not unbridgeable. As I looked around church life at different points in history there were examples of different groups and churches who had been able to bridge the gap.

The same can be said today of the patterns of attendance revealed in this study. Whilst there are many credibility gaps separating the churches and segments of Australian society they are not unbridgeable. There are many churches and groups in Australia today which are proof of that fact. Their experiences could provide important insights for other churches. Hopefully this study will encourage reflection via case studies on churches that are exceptions to the general patterns we have outlined.

In chapter 5 were presented some of the implications for the churches of part 2 of this study. We stress here the critical importance for the churches of working to *understand the nature of the community of which they are a part.* Too often clergy and church people are so busy running their programmes that they neglect to stop and see their work within the wider community context.

Some suggestions were provided in chapter 8 about how to go about that task. It was also stressed there that a *community is not a static entity but rather is an alive and changing collection of networks of people. Reaching out to the community involves understanding and tapping into one or more of these networks in a way that can open up the whole network to the message and life of the churches.* In examining the nature of social networks we discovered people with specific roles — central network figures, gate keepers and flack-catchers, to name just three!

Perhaps an example here may be of assistance. A blue collar community in a public housing estate had a long history of poor church attendance. In terms of the model it had very low receptivity to the churches. Many churches had run programmes but had failed to build a sustainable church presence. One of these groups then tried a more low key approach and over a period of time established close and meaningful relationships with some key individuals on the estate. Acceptance at that point created a breakthrough. The acknowledgment by these opinion formers on the estate that this church group was alright opened the door to an effective ministry to many of the residents in a way the church had not previously thought possible.

It is clearly easier to achieve a high level of connectedness between church and community amongst some social groupings than amongst others. The principles, however, remain the same. In chapter 4 we noted three prerequisites drawn loosely from the work of Currie, Gilbert and Horsley (1977, 59). With the benefit of the results of this study we examine them again here.

The first prerequisite for connectedness can be summarised by the word ***proximity.*** The church and church members must actually be available to the

cultural grouping in question This is a basic requirement In some rural and outback areas distance may be a severe limit in this regard Church plant and person-power resources are not evenly spread across the different types of communities New blue-collar estates tend to have the lowest levels of such resources It can be of little surprise then that attendance rates will be lower in such areas The limits to connectedness are created by a lack of proximity.

There are however many communities well endowed with church plant and clergy or priests but where, whilst they are available, they could hardly be described as accessible In one way or another the limiting factor is not community receptivity but rather church openness An obvious example occurs for Protestant churches in highly multicultural communities There, Anglo Australian congregations and clergy are often quite inaccessible to people from various ethnic groupings. Again, an elderly congregation is likely to face added difficulties reaching people of a younger age and outlook. Whilst it must be quite rare, I have been in a congregation that has faced the opposite problem!

The churches, if they are to reach a wider spectrum of Australians, must engage in a process of bridge building So often church people are quite insular. If the cultural limits are to be crossed, churches will need to foster interaction with other groups, assisting to build bridges across which there can be an interaction and a two-way flow of ideas Where such a process has occurred the evidence is that the various cultural straight jackets of church life can be broken There are examples of church life in all denominations where the age and socio economic barriers have been crossed The general patterns of attendance outlined in this study are not absolute They reflect the particular forms of church life prevalent in our society that have served to create and reinforce them

Of central importance are the laity of the churches. Their priorities, background, gifts and leadership are the resources with which a church can start to build people-bridges into the wider community.

The second prerequisite for improving the degree of connectedness of a church to its local community can be summarised as ***congruity.*** Church life and actions must be culturally appropriate to the local context This can be particularly difficult in situations where what is appropriate with a particular cultural group flies in the face of established denominational traditions An example of this could be the desire amongst many younger people for less formal and more lively worship services.

All churches have developed over time a very elaborate set of codes, jargon and insider terminology, shorthand forms of communication, not to mention complex doctrines and traditions To someone without a church background these can be very confusing and threatening. If churches wish to have a high degree of openness they may need to translate some insider codes and traditions into more commonplace forms in order that communication may be able to proceed with the unchurched To give an obvious example: as important as the concept is to church people, just what does it mean to someone outside church life to be 'washed in the blood of the Lamb'? Unless its

meaning is made clear, taken at face value by an outsider it is hardly an attract ive proposition!

The question of congruity will be an extremely sensitive one in diverse communities where church life does not reflect that diversity In such cases congruity will usually require a church to set a priority on developing a small core of indigenous leadership who may be best able to minister across the cul tural divides It was noted in chapter 15 that ethnic ministries sponsored by es tablished churches nearly always involved at their core a member or members of that ethnic group Likewise some churches relating to motorcycle groups in Sydney and Melbourne have been developed by bikers themselves In each case, church life that has developed from these ministries has been allowed to become culturally appropriate to those for whom it is intended Needless to say this has not come about easily or without struggle.

Churches in Australia have given little thought to the cultural appropriateness of their ministries. Yet if the same people were to work in a foreign culture overseas, it would be perfectly natural to encourage local leadership and to establish patterns of church life and ministry that were culturally appropriate. In the missionary fields in our own back yards these principles are no less important and must be rediscovered.

The third prerequisite for connectedness with the local community can be summarised by the word ***utility.*** A church will need to consider its utility to the wider community As social institutions the churches perform at the same time both religious and social roles As many have pointed out, people can join churches for a range of reasons Some may be religious in essence. Others are more easily described as social reasons a desire to meet other people, to be part of a group, to have something to do and so on Most churches are glad to accept attenders for either reason, no doubt feeling (perhaps rightly) that some of the religious message may also rub off In considering the receptivity to the churches of a particular community we must look carefully at the churches' social utility Historically particularly in small towns and some stable dormitory suburbs, churches have had a very clear social role as a piv otal point in community life This may still occur within some sections of con temporary Australian life and amongst certain cultural and ethnic groups. However, in many other sections of the community, church life has lost any real social significance.

A church needs to look closely at the community it wishes to serve What are their real needs? What is it that the church is actually offering? Is there an area of intersection of these?

Two comments should be made on the question of utility Whilst the old social role of the churches as pivotal points for community life has substantially declined, a church can develop quite different points of access Instead of the historical approach of churches as powerful organisations, many are now starting to realize that there can be great value in relating to the community from a position more alongside it The example of the church group in the public housing estate provides a useful illustration of how small-

scale grass-roots contact based on mutual respect could achieve more than some larger-scale service delivery type programmes.

The second point is also of importance. In times when churches are losing their social utility, it should come as no surprise that many within them are examining again their religious utility. Put simply, the question becomes 'What is the central task of the churches?'

In many congregations today there would appear to be a profound search going on. This study has pointed to the most obvious manifestation of this in the growth of the Pentecostal churches and the charismatic movement. These groups seek to discover anew the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The movement has an emphasis on God's power revealed in ways such as miraculous healing. The utility of the message is well revealed in an advertisement in a South Australian newspaper for a major religious rally: no description of the event or the speaker, simply the words "Come and be healed".

The searching within the churches reveals itself in other ways as well, including the increasing emphasis on small groups and intimacy and on meditation and contemplation.

AND SO MUCH MORE TO BE DONE

This study has raised a great many issues. From a solid data base conclusions and implications have been drawn. Yet it also raises a wide range of further questions. Hopefully, it can provide a starting point for a range of research into issues related to the churches. It can provide a broad panorama into which some more detail can be fitted and beyond which, just over the horizon, lies a whole range of further questions.

APPENDICES

Tables and Technical Details

These appendices provide further technical details and data used in the 'Who Goes Where?' study. It is divided into four sections, dealing with the church and census data, AVSS, McNair-Anderson and older survey data respectively. These appendices are of necessity brief. Fuller details are available from the author on request.

APPENDIX 1: CHURCH AND CENSUS DATA

1.1 AVAILABLE DATA

Table A1.1 Church Attendance Data

The following table summarises data collected on church involvement for each church in the region covered. In some cases the information has come from published records, in others from estimates by the clergy at each church.

Denomination	*Region Covered*	*Type of Data*	*Comments*
Uniting Church	NSW/ACT	attendance	Total attendance including children (1983)
Anglican	Sydney Diocese	attendance	Total attendance including children (1984)
Catholic	Sydney Archdiocese	attendance	Total mass attendance (1984)
Churches of Christ	NSW	attendance	published records (1983-4)
Baptist	NSW	membership	published records (1983-4)
Presbyterian	NSW	adult communicants	published records (1983-4)
Salvation Army	Sydney	attendance	total attendance (1984)
Scripture Union	Sydney	supporters	obtained for each postcode area (1984)
Vision Ministries	Sydney	supporters	obtained for each postcode area (1986)

Table A1.2 Regional Variations in Church Involvement in Non-Urban Areas

Attenders/Members/Communicants Per Thousand in Population

Region	Uniting Attenders	Baptist Members	Presbyterian Communicants	Churches of Christ Attenders
Far North Coast	16	3 6	14	3 0
M d North Coast	14	2 3	8	2 8
Northern In and	10	2 8	12	2 5
Hunter Va ley	11	4 3	5	1 2
Centra West	14	3 6	9	0.3
Far West	8	1 1	—	—
R verina	16	2 4	12	0 8
South Coast and Tablelands	11	1.3	3	—

Table A1.3 Regional Variations in Church Involvement in Sydney

Attenders/Members/Supporters Per Thousand in Population

Region	Cath. Att.	Angl. Att.	Uniting Att.	Pres. Comm.	Bapt. Memb.	Church Christ Att.	Salv. Army Att.	Script. Union Supp.	Vision Min's Supp.
Upper North Shore	84	40	23	3	4	1 6	1 5	3 6	2 1
Lower North Shore	67	21	7	5	2	1 9	1.0	2 2	1 5
North western Suburbs	66	22	14	4	8	3.1	1 7	3 3	2 4
Northern Beaches	58	14	8	3	4	0 6	1 3	1 5	2 0
Ryde Eastwood	97	22	13	13	12	2 6	0 1	4 0	2 1
Hls-Dura	92	18	11	5	7	1.9	2 8	2.3	0 4
Blue Mountains	77	25	12	9	12	2 7	2 5	—	1 7
Western Ribbon	57	7	3	2	3	2 4	1.6	0 6	1 0
Parramatta	93	8	4	2	5	1 3	1 7	1 3	1 9
Bankstown/ East Hils	79	7	4	1	5	1 4	1.3	1.1	0.7
Auburn/ Strathfield	98	11	5	3	4	1 7	2 0	1.1	1 6
nner West	67	10	5	2	3	1.5	4 6	1 4	0.9
nner Metropol tan	90	8	2	1	1	0.3	1 9	1 0	1.4
Burwood/ Dulw ch H ll	79	9	3	4	5	0 5	4 0	1 6	1 3
Eastern Suburbs	54	17	3	2	1	1 3	0 6	1.2	0 9
Randwick/Botany	77	6	1	2	1	1 2	0.3	0.7	1 4
Kogarah/ Rockda e	50	10	7	3	4	2 2	3 2	1.7	1.8

Table A1.3 — *Continued*

Attenders/Members/Supporters Per Thousand in Population

Region	*Cath. Att.*	*Angl. Att.*	*Uniting Att.*	*Pres. Comm.*	*Bapt. Memb.*	*Church Christ Att.*	*Salv. Army Att.*	*Script. Union Supp.*	*Vision Min's Supp.*
Sutherland	86	15	7	3	6	2 4	0 4	1 9	1 /
Southern Suburbs	83	16	8	2	9	2 8	5 0	3 1	1 3
Liverpool/ Fairfield	75	4	2	1	2	2 2	0 6	0 6	0 9
Campbelltown	61	10	3	1	3	1.5	1.0	1 4	0 8

Table A1.4 Correlations between Denominational Patterns in Sydney

	Catholic	*Anglican*	*Uniting*	*Presbyterian*	*Baptist*	*Churches of Christ*
Anglican	+ 14					
Uniting	+ 21	+ 92				
Presbyterian	+ 31	+ 53	+ 53			
Baptist	+ 38	+ 44	+.55	+ 75		
Churches of Christ	− 02	+.32	+ 40	+.39	+.60	
Salvation Army	− 01	− 05	+ 02	− 16	+.22	+ 02

Table A1.5 Predictors Used in Social Profiles of Parishes

PREDICTOR	*DESCRIPTION*
Population	
Same residence in 1976	Percentage of community living in the residence in 1981 as in 1976
Age	
0–9	Percentage of residents aged 0–9 years
10–19	Percentage of residents aged 10–19 years
20–29	Percentage of residents aged 20–29 years
30–39	Percentage of residents aged 30–39 years
40–49	Percentage of residents aged 40–49 years
50–59	Percentage of residents aged 50–59 years
60–69	Percentage of residents aged 60–69 years
70+	Percentage of residents aged over 70 years
Average Age	Average age of residents in the community

Table A1.5 — *Continued*

PREDICTOR	*DESCRIPTION*
Marital Status/Family Life	
Separated	Percentage of residents who are separated
Divorced	Percentage of residents who are divorced
Widowed	Percentage of residents who are widowed
Live Alone	Percentage of residents who live alone
Single Parent Families	Percentage of residents who live in single parent households
Childless Couples	Percentage of residents who are couples without dependents
Couples with Dependents	Percentage of residents who are couples with dependents
Non Family Members of Households	Percentage of residents who are boarders, co-tenants, guests, employees etc of the couple with whom they live, whose primary family resides elsewhere
Multi-Family Households	Percentage of residents living in households containing more than one family
Ethnicity	
Born Overseas	Percentage of residents who were born overseas
Non English-speaking, Recent Immigrants	Percentage of residents who were born in non-English speaking countries and resident in Australia less than five years
Aboriginals	Percentage of Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders in the community
Education	
University	Percentage of residents over 15 years of age with university degrees or equivalent
Trade	Percentage of residents over 15 years of age with trade certificates
No Qualifications	Percentage of residents over 15 years of age without educational qualifications
Occupation	
Professional/Technical	Percentage of those employed who work in professional or technical occupations
Labourer/Process Worker	Percentage of those employed who work as labourers or process workers
Unemployed-1981 Census	Percentage of workforce in community who are unemployed at 1981 census
Unemployed-1984 CES*[2]	Percentage of workforce in region who are unemployed in 1984 (CES)
Income	
Over $26,000	Percentage in community earning over $26,000 per annum (1981 figures)

Table A1.5 — *Continued*

PREDICTOR	*DESCRIPTION*
Average Income	Average annual income of residents
Full-time females	Percentage of females in full-time employment
Housing	
Own House	Percentage of residents who own their house
Purchasing House	Percentage of residents who are purchasing their house
Renting Privately	Percentage of residents who are renting their house privately
Renting from Housing	Percentage of residents who are renting their house from the Housing Commission
Nominal Religious Data From Census	
Catholic	Percentage of people claiming affiliation to the Catholic Church
Anglican	Percentage of people claiming affiliation to the Anglican Church
Uniting/Methodist/ Presbyterian	Percentage of people claiming affiliation to the Uniting, Methodist or Presbyterian Churches
No Religion	Percentage of people not claiming any religious affiliation

N B All data are from the 1981 census except
**1 N S W Department of Environment and Planning*
**2 Commonwealth Employment Service 1984*

1.2 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ATTENDANCE RATES AND SOCIAL PROFILE PREDICTORS

Table A1.6 Correlations with General Attendance Rates Index [*1]

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Catholic*	*Uniting*	
			urban	*non-urban*
Population				
Same residence in 1976	+.05	+ 11	+.08	+ 28
Population Growth	+ 07		+.12	− 12
Population of Largest Town, (non-urban)	−		−	− 39
Population of Parish (non-urban)	−	−	−	− 49

Table A1.6 — *Continued*

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Catholic*	*Uniting*	
			urban	*non-urban*
Age				
0–9	−.14	+.05	+.10	+.24
10–19	+.03	+ 03	+ 21	−.16
20–29	−.34	- 12	−.34	−.44
30–39	− 16	−.10	−.14	+ 10
40–49	+.08	+ 06	00	+ 03
50–59	+.18	+.05	+ 03	+.18
60–69	+.25	+.04	+ 06	+.12
70 +	+ 30	+ 03	+ 05	+ 16
Average Age	+.26	+.02	−.01	+.10
Marital Status/Family Life				
Separated	−.28	−.22	−.46	− 42
Divorced	−.12	−.23	−.36	−.35
Widowed	+.13	+ 03	−.9	+ 03
Live Alone	−.01	− 15	−.25	−.12
Single Parent Families	−.20	−.31	−.09	−.05
Childless Couples	+ 24	− 07	+.11	+.07
Couples with Dependents	− 04	+ 12	+.19	+.26
Non-family Members of Households	−.04	+ 12	+.19	+.26
Multi-Family Households	+ 05	+ 01	−.15	−.39
	−.42	+.10	−.42	−.14
Ethnicity				
Born Overseas	− 39	+.06	−.51	− 33
Non English-speaking, Recent Immigrants	−.35	−.04	− 44	−.22
Aboriginals	−.30	−.16	−.29	− 15
Education				
University	+ 44	−.11	+ 32	− 14
Trade	− 18	+.12	-.05	−.31
No Qualifications	− 59	+.05	− 45	+ 22
Occupation				
Professional/Technical	+.54	− 07	+.44	−.18
Labourer/Process Worker	−.50	+ 01	− 44	−.29
Unemployed–1981 Census	−.37	− 13	−.37	+.03
Unemployed–1981 Census	−.44	−	− 40	− 05
Income				
Over $26,000	+.54	− 07	+.40	− 04
Average Income	+ 42	−.07	+.29	−.21
Full-time Females	26	− 09	-.31	+ 26
Housing				
Own House	+ 30	+ 20	+.11	+ 58
Purchasing House	+ 14	+ 05	+ 32	−.27
Renting Privately	−.17	−.11	− 39	− 35
Renting from Housing Commission	− 27	−.13	−.08	−.51

Table A1.6 — *Continued*

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Catholic*	*Uniting*	
			urban	*non-urban*
Nominal Religious Affiliation				
Catholic	—	+ 31	—	—
Anglican	+ 37	—	—	—
Uniting/Methodist/Presbyterian	—	—	+ 63	+ .52
Minimum values for statistical significance at a 5% level are as follows	14	14	17	.20

**1 Number of attenders per thousand people resident in parish area. Coefficients are Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients.*

Table A1.7 Correlations with Attendance Rates of Nominal Adherents [*1]

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Catholic*	*Uniting*	
			urban	*non-urban*
Population				
Same residence in 1976	− 01	+ .04	− .10	+ 22
Population Growth	+ 04	—	− .01	− 09
Population of Largest Town, (non urban)	—	—	—	− .34
Population of Parish (non urban)	—	—	—	− 40
Age				
0–9	− 30	− .05	+ .07	+ 17
10-19	− 11	− .09	+ 08	− .15
20-29	− 20	− 22	− .17	− .37
30 39	− 17	+ 01	− 06	+ 05
40–49	+ 13	+ 12	+ 01	.00
50–59	+ 24	+ .11	− 04	+ .11
60–69	+ 32	+ .16	− 01	+ .10
70 +	+ 41	+ .16	− 04	+ .13
Average Age	+ 39	+ .16	− 01	+ 09
Marital Status/Family Life				
Separated	− 11	- .17	− 24	− 27
Divorced	+ 04	- 12	− .20	− 20
Widowed	+ 28	+ .07	− 08	+ .02
Live Alone	+ 17	− 06	− 09	− 02
Single Parent Families	− 26	− .30	− 02	+ .08
Childless Couples	+ .25	− .01	01	+ 09
Couples with Dependents	− 20	.00	+ 10	+ .17
Non-Family Members of Households	+ 20	+ .17	− 01	− 28
Multi-Family Households	− 34	− .18	− .29	− 06

Table A1.7 — *Continued*

Predictor	*Anglican*	*Catholic*	*Uniting*	
			urban	*non-urban*
Ethnicity				
Born Overseas	−.08	−.09	−.05	−.15
Non English-speaking, Recent Immigrants	−.07	−.12	−.06	−.06
Aboriginals	−.30	−.23	−.21	−.14
Education				
University	+.48	+.16	+.39	+.02
Trade	−.36	−.02	−.28	−.22
No Qualifications	−.51	−.25	−.40	+.04
Occupation				
Professional/Technical	+.54	+.19	+.39	−.04
Labourer Process Worker	−.37	−.27	−.34	−.18
Unemployed-1981 Census	.24	−.21	−.20	+.09
Unemployed-1981 CES	−.26	—	−.33	−.04
Income				
Over $26,000	+.46	+.26	+.36	−.09
Average Income	+.35	+.20	+.29	−.22
Full-time Females	−.12	−.24	−.03	+.14
Housing				
Own House	+.33	+.10	−.06	+.40
Purchasing House	−.10	+.06	−.16	−.20
Renting Privately	+.05	−.01	−.12	−.21
Renting from Housing Commission	−.32	−.20	−.01	−.35
Nominal Religious Affiliation				
Catholic	—	−.16	—	—
Anglican	+.02	—	—	—
Uniting/Methodist/Presbyterian	—		+.15	+.10
Minimum values for statistical significance at a 5% level are as follows	.14	.14	.17	.20

**1 Number of attenders per thousand nominal adherents in parish area. Coefficients are Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients.*

These correlations were calculated on the basis of the actual percentages for each social profile predictor. For ease of presentation in the text of chapters 6 and 7, parishes were categorised as low, medium and high on each predictor. The 25 per cent of parishes with the lowest levels on a given predictor were classified as 'low', the 25 per cent with the highest levels as 'high' and the remaining 50 per cent as 'medium'. Average church attendance rates were then calculated for each category.

1.3 PREDICTIVE MODELS OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Table A1.8 Predictive Models of Church Attendance

A. Anglican Church Attendance Patterns (per thousand in population)

Predictor	*Correlations with Attendance Rates*	*Raw Coefficients*	*Standardised Coefficients*	*Variance Explained when fitted last (%)*	*Probability Levels*
30–39 years	−0 16	−0 03303	−0 12	0.93	0 02 < P < 0 05
Couples with Dependents	−0 04	0 02479	0 44	3 36	P < 0.001
Non English-speaking (Recent Immigrants)	−0 35	−0 08147	−0 27	4 44	P < 0 001
University	0 44	−0.15501	−0 87	3 29	P < 0 001
No Qualifications	−0 59	−0 05302	−0 50	2.76	P < 0 001
Professional/ Technical	0 54	0 09366	0 89	4.12	P < 0 001
Earning over $26,000	0 54	0 07069	0.29	1 07	0 02 < P < 0 05
Purchasing House	0 14	−0 03544	−0 68	6 90	P < 0 001

Percentage of Variance Explained 55 1%

Predictor	*30–39*	*Couples with Dependents*	*Non English-speaking Recent Immigrants*	*University*	*No Qualifications*	*Professional/ Technical*	*Earning over $26,000*
Couples with Dependents	0 14						
Non English-speaking, Recent Immigrants	−0 08	−0.36					
University	0 15	−0 39	0 03				
No Qualifications	−0 18	0 11	0 26	−0 84			
Professional / Technical	0 11	−0 32	−0 10	0 94	−0 90		
Earning over $26,000	0 03	−0 03	−0.18	0 84	−0 84	0 80	
Purchasing House	0 28	0 79	−0 56	−0 01	−0 33	0 11	0 21

B. Uniting Church Attendance Patterns (Per thousand in population) — Urban N.S.W.

Predictor	*Correlations with Attendance Rates*	*Raw Coefficients*	*Standardised Coefficients*	*Variance Explained when fitted last (%)*	*Probability Levels*
0–9 years	+0.10	0 02951	0.41	3 19	.001 < P < .01
30–39 years	–0 14	–0 03762	–0 30	2 61	.001 < P < 01
D vorced	–0 36	–0 07495	0 30	2 04	01 < P < .02
Born Overseas	–0 51	–0 01345	–0 35	9 17	P < .001
Professiona / Technical	+0 44	0.03581	0 69	22 82	P < 001
Purchas ng House	+0 32	–0 00670	–0 28	1.59	02<P < 05

Percentage of Variance Expla ned 58 4%

Predictor	*0–9*	*30–39*	*Divorced*	*Born Overseas*	*Professional/ Technical*
30–39	+0 54				
D vorced	–0 67	–0 02			
Born Overseas	–0 28	+0.07	+0 37		
Professional/ Technical	–0 32	+0 13	+0.16	–0 04	
Purchasing House	+0 66	+0 47	–0 70	–0 39	+0 22

C. Uniting Church Attendance Patterns (Per thousand in population) — Non-Urban N.S.W.

Predictor	*Correlations with Attendance Rates*	*Raw Coefficients*	*Standardized Coefficients*	*Variance Explained when fitted last (%)*	*Probability Levels*
Populat on of Parish	0 49	–0 00001	–0 28	3 48	0 02 < P < 0 05
0–9 year olds	+0.24	0.04571	0 32	6 35	0 001 < P < 0 01
20–29 year olds	–0 44	–0.04290	–0 34	6 92	0 001 < P < 0 01
With Un vers ty Degree	0.14	–0.11685	–0.53	8 90	0.001 < P < 0 01
With No Qualifications	+0 22	–0 01992	–0 32	2 96	0 02 < P < 0 05
Profess onal/ Technical	–0 18	0 04629	0 45	6 04	0 001 < P < 0 01
Females in F/T Workforce	+0 26	0 01711	0.35	6 74	0.001 < P < 0 01
Rent Hous ng Authority	–0 51	–0 02915	–0.39	9 07	0.001 < P < 0 01

Percentage of Var ance Explained 57 9%

Table A1.8 — *Continued*

Predictor	*0–9 years*	*20–29 years*	*University*	*No Qualifications*	*Professional/ Technical*	*Female in Full-time Workforce*
20–29 years	–0 17					
University	–0 31	0.02				
No Qualifications	0 17	0.24	–0 84			
Professional / Technical	–0 32	–0 09	0 88	–0 91		
Females in Full-time Workforce	–0 23	0 54	0 39	–0.22	0.25	
Renting from Housing Authority	0 30	0 25	–0 10	0.28	–0 26	0 01

APPENDIX 2: THE AUSTRALIAN VALUES STUDY SURVEY (AVSS)

2.1 AVAILABLE VARIABLES

Table A2.1 Religious Variables in AVSS

Code Name	
Org 2	'Are you a member of a church or religious organisation?' No/yes
WkOrg2	'Do you do voluntary work for a church or religious organisation?' No/yes
Relgatt	'How often do you attend religious services? At least monthly/monthly to yearly/less frequently
Prayer	'Do you ever take moments for prayer, meditation or contemplation? Never/rarely/fairly often
Religex1	Ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or power, either God or something else — but different from your everyday self?' Not aware/occasionally aware/often aware
Relgex2	'Ever felt as though you were very close to a powerful, spiritual lifeforce that seemed to lift you out of yourself?' Never/once or twice/often
BGod	'Do you believe in God?'
BLaftD	'Do you believe in life after death?
BSoul	'Do you believe in a Soul?'
BDevi	'Do you believe in the Devil?'
BHel	'Do you believe in Hell?'
BHeaven	Do you believe in Heaven?
BSin	Do you believe in Sin?' No/don't know/yes
Btot	Accept orthodox Christian Beliefs' A scale developed from the above belief questions Few/some/most/accept all
Comm1 to Comm10	'Does the First Commandment still apply for you today?' 'Does the Tenth Commandment still apply for you today?' No/don't know/yes
Comgod	Believe the first three commandments to be still relevant today' No/partly/mainly/completely relevant
Comman	Believe the final seven commandments to be still relevant today No/partly/mainly/completely relevant
Church	'How much confidence do you have in the church?' None/not much/quite a lot/a great deal
Belief	'How would you describe God?' No God or life force/don't know/there is spirit or life force/there is a personal God

Table A2.1 — *Continued*

Code Name

ImpGod	'How important is God in your life?' Rating on a 10 point scale
Satrelg	'How do you feel about your religious fulfilment?' A 10 point scale
Relgp	'Independently of whether you attend church, would you say you were a religious person or not?' Convinced atheist/not religious/am religious
Religbel	'Apart from family, is there anything you would consider worth sacrificing all for, even risking your life if necessary?' Religion mentioned/not mentioned
mrelig	'How important are shared religious beliefs to a happy marriage?' Not important/rather important/very important
Relfath	'importance of teaching children religious beliefs at home?' Not important/important
Relor	'Overall religious orientation A scale developed from all the above religious variables Respondents grouped into 5 equi-sized categories

Table A2.2 Socio-demographic Predictors used in AVSS Analysis — A Selected List

Gender
Male/Female

Age Group
Under 18/18-29 years/30-44 years/45-59 years/60 years and over

Marital Status
Single/married first time/remarried/divorced or separated/widowed/de facto

Size of Household
Number of persons in household

Children aged 0–4 years:
Children aged 5–12 years:
Children aged 13–17 years:
Number of children in each age range in household

Workforce Involvement:
Workforce Involvement of Main Income Earner:
Full time/part-time/not in paid employment

Occupation:
Occupation of Main Income Earner:
Professional/senior management/other white collar/skilled/semi skilled/unskilled

Occupational Status:
Occupational Status of Main Income Earner:
Upper/middle/lower

Table A2.2 — *Continued*

Housing Tenure:
Own/rent

Country of Birth:
Australia/New Zealand, UK/Northern Europe/Southern Europe/ Other

Population of Town or City of Residence:
Under 1 000 persons/1,000–5,000 persons/ 5,000–10,000 persons/10,000 -25,000 persons/25,000–50,000 persons/over 50,000 persons/capital city

Language Spoken in Household
English only/another language

Level of Education Reached.
Primary only/some secondary/completed secondary/ some tertiary/graduate

Age Completed Education:
Under 16 years/16 17 years/18 21 years/over 21 years

Denomination
Anglican/Catholic/Uniting, Presbyterian, Methodist/Other Christian/Other

2.2 RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION — A MULTI-FACETED CONCEPT?

Analysis of the relationship of the different religious variables to each other was carried out using two statistical techniques — exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis The results of the exploratory factor analysis suggested that whilst there was a strong general religious factor, there were also several more specific factors that were required to describe the responses In order to test this more explicitly, several models were examined using confirmatory factor analysis This procedure tests the goodness of fit of a particular model and was carried out independently of the exploratory factor analysis.

Several models of the structure of responses were tested. Initially, a unidimensional model was fitted Such a model assumes that people will answer all religious questions in a similar manner The results for this model are summarised in table A2 3. This table suggests that, whilst the model did have a reasonable fit to the data, we could probably do better with a multivariate model

In chapter 3 was presented Glock and Stark's model of religious orientation The AVSS data has questions relating to several of their religious dimensions In developing a multivariate model here, such theoretical considerations have been used alongside the empirical findings of the 'general factor only' model The results for the 'General Plus Four Factor' model is also

shown in table A2 3 It included a general religious orientation factor with four sub-dimensions roughly coinciding with Glock and Stark's ritual experiential, ethicalism and orthodoxy of belief dimensions By all measures this model was a better fit than a single general religious factor.

Table 2.3 Models of Religious Orientation

A. The 'General Factor Only' Model - Maximum Likelihood Estimation

	Loadings on General Factor		*Loadings on General Factor*
Org2	0.5912	Religex2	0 4417
WkOrg2	0.4235	Religbel	0 4016
Satre.ig	0.5659	Comm1	0.7652
Religatt	0.7029	Comm2	0.7063
Religp	0 6901	Comm3	0 6868
BGod	0 6526	Comm4	0 2860
BLaftD	0.5309	Comm5	0 2641
BSoul	0.5585	Comm6	0 4232
BDev.l	0.5896	Comm7	0 2864
BHell	0 5851	Comm8	0 3321
BHeaven	0 6785	Comm9	0.3752
BSin	0.5481	Comm10	0 3811
Be ief	0 6817	mrelig	0.4978
impGod	0.8546	Re faith	0 5502
Prayer	0 6693	Church	0 7068
Religex1	0 5230		

Magnitudes of Residuals
Mean = 0 061
5 2% greater than 0 2
Largest Residual — 0 56

Significance Level
Ch.-square w th 434 degrees of freedom is 6945 6514
Probabi ty Level = 0 000

B. The 'General Plus Four Factor' Model — Maximum Likelihood Estimation

	General Factor	*Orthodoxy Factor*	*Ethicalism Factor*	*Ritual Factor*	*Experiential Factor*
Org2	0 5505			0 7108	
WkOrg2	0 3788			0 4916	
Satrelig	0 5673				
Religatt	0 6809			0 4407	
Religp	0 7085				
BGod	0 6757				
BLafta	0 4905	0 3142			

Table 2.3 — *Continued*

	Loadings on General Factor				*Loadings on General Factor*
BSoul	0 5377	0 2388			
BDevi	0 5208	0 7018			
BHell	0 5178	0 7326			
BHeaven	0 6625	0 3179			
BSin	0 5187	0.3036			
Bel ef	0 6869				
ImpGod	0 8800				
Prayer	0.6522				0 3443
Re igex1	0 4876				0 6430
Re igex2	0 4055				0 5423
Religbel	0 3720				
Comm1	0 7862				
Comm2	0 7237				
Comm3	0 6924				
Comm4	0 2636		0 4183		
Comm5	0 2270		0 5657		
Comm6	0 3909		0 5899		
Comm7	0 2412		0 6562		
Comm8	0 2934		0 6263		
Comm9	0 3376		0 7005		
Comm10	0.3514		0 6739		
mreig	0 5013				
Re fa tn	0 5398				
Church	0 7178				

Magnitudes of Residuals

Mean = 0 036 Largest = 0.21
0 6% of res dua s are over 0 2
These residuals are between Religbe and Religex1 (0 21), Religex2 (0 20) and OrG2 (0 20)

Ch -square with 415 degrees of freedom s 2311 5580
Probabil ty leve = 0 0000

The AVSS thus lends some support to the existence of different dimensions of religious orientation and to some of the dimensions in the Glock and Stark typology However, the limitations of this study must be borne closely in mind The AVSS questions were not framed for such a study and there can be many criticisms of the questions and the way in which they were framed What we have here, then, are hints at trends rather than a highly defensible model.

It is, however, these hints at trends that are needed for this study. Religious orientation is a multifaceted phenomenon. The model developed here can serve as a framework for interpretation Whilst in this study we have not gone as far as creating scales for each dimension, variables on each of the

specific dimensions have been grouped together and reference is made to predictors affecting one aspect of religious experience more than another. In order to streamline presentation an 'orthodoxy of beliefs' variable was created from the relevant questions. Further, the commandments questions were telescoped into two variables, grouping responses to the first three and last seven commandments together. The former reflect issues of our relationship to God whilst the latter correspond to ethical issues. Finally, a 'general religious orientation' variable was created as the sum of all religious responses.

2.3 UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Table A2.4 Correlations between Predictors and Religious Variables — AVSS (1983)

Predictors	*Members of Church/ Religious Organisation*	*Voluntary Work for Church/ Religious Organisation*	*Regular Attenders at Church*	*Pray Regularly*	*Aware of Supernatural Power*	*Close to and Affected by a Powerful Spiritual Life Force*
Denomination	32	.18	.31	19	.16	14
Gender	.06	.06	.11	19	.12	.09
Age	14	.10	.10	.12	.08	.10
Marital Status	.14	.10	.12	12	N.S.	.09
Size of Household	15	N S	12	N.S	N S.	N S
Children aged						
0–4 years	N S	N S	N S	.11	N.S.	N S
5–12 years	.10	N S	10	N S	N S	N S
13–17 years	N S.	.08	09	N S	N S.	N.S
Workforce involvement	08	11	08	13	09	N.S
Occupation	N S	14	14	12	N S.	N S
Occupation of Main Income Earner	.10	10	12	N S	N S	N S
Occupational Status	.11	N S.	.12	.13	N S	N S
Occupational Status of Main Income Earner	10	08	08	N S	N S.	N S
Housing Tenure	.12	10	.14	N S	N.S.	N S
Country of Birth	08	N S	08	N S	08	N S
Population of City or Town of Residence	11	.14	10	N S.	10	N S
Language spoken in Household	N S	N S	11	N S	.11	N S
Level of Education Reached	N S	N.S	N S	N S.	N S.	N S
Age Completed Education	N S	N S	N S	N S	N S	N.S

Table A2.4 — *Continued*

Predictors	*Hold Orthodox Christian Beliefs*	*Believes the First Three Commandments Are Still Relevant Today*	*Believes the Last Seven Commandments Are Still Relevant Today*	*Overall Religious Orientation*
Denomination	28	26	16	25
Gender	.18	.15	09	.20
Age	11	16	16	14
Marital Status	14	13	14	12
Size of Household	N S	N S.	N S	N S
Children Aged				
0–4 years	.11	N S	N S	N S
5–12 years	N S.	N S	N S.	N S
13–17 years	N S	N S	N S	N S
Workforce involvement	14	12	.11	13
Occupation	.16	N S	N S	N S
Occupation of Main Income Earner	N S	N.S	.09	09
Occupational Status	14	N S	N S.	N S
Occupational Status of Main Income Earner	07	N S	N S	N S
Housing Tenure	09	N S	.12	.13
Country of Birth	N S.	N S	N S	N S
Population of City or Town of Residence	N S	0 9	10	—
Language Spoken in Household	N S	0 9	N S	—
Level of Education Reached	14	11	.10	08
Age Completed Education	10	11	.10	—

Note These are Cramer's V Coefficients For direction of association see text Unless marked N S (not significant), each correlation was statistically significant at a 5% level or better

2.4 MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

In order to start to discern some of the basic forces affecting religious orientation, we turned in this study to more complex multivariate analysis

The form of multivariate procedure chosen as most appropriate here is a Manova analysis This is a multivariate linear models analysis which can examine the effect of the socio-demographic predictors on all the religious variables at the same time We employ the discriminant function — a weighted linear combination of the religious variables - as a tool for interpretation.

The religious variables were ordered so that, in all cases, high scores indicated a more religious orientation There were too many variables to be fitted into a single full model so a reduced model was created by first dividing the

socio-demographic predictors into nine subsets. Each subset was fitted and any variables not significant at a 5 per cent level were omitted from the model. Remaining variables were then fitted and those not significant at a 1 per cent level were removed using a backwards elimination process. The final reduced model is described in table A2.5.

Table A2.5 Manova — Reduced Model

Variable	*d.f.*	*Wilk's Lambda*	*P*	*Percent of Variance Explained When Fitted Last*
Gender	1	0.9713356	.009	1.9
Age	10	0.7938583	.000	15.4
Country	10	0.8308020	.010	12.2
State	5	0.8913715	.001	7.5
City size	6	0.8730011	.000	8.9
Employment Status	7	0.8611730	.001	9.8
Level of Education	11	0.7798532	.000	16.7
Number in House	8	0.8372287	.000	11.7
FULL MODEL	58	0.2391866		

Overall Percent of Variance Explained by Model: 76.1%

This model is capable of predicting between 5 per cent and 15 per cent of the variation in each religious variable. In the case of church attendance, for instance, it can predict around 10 per cent variation. There can be many sources for the remaining variation. This is a general model. Presumably models predicting individual religious variables could be produced which may be more powerful. Some of the remaining variations could be due to respondent bias as discussed in chapter 2. Alternatively, some may be due to variations in community characteristics: the values and norms of local cultures may exert different pressures on people with otherwise similar characteristics. With a few exceptions the available predictors all related to individual characteristics.

Of the eight predictors retained in this model, two are measuring characteristics of the community. This suggests that studies of religious orientation would be well advised to further probe the effects of community and culture.

Finally, the unexplained variation could be looked for in differing denominational traditions and in factors internal to the lives of the churches.

The eight predictors retained in the model are, in order of their predictive power: level of education reached, age, country of birth, number in home, nature of workforce participation, population of town or city in which the respondent lives, state and gender. Their relative contributions to the overall predictive power of the model are given in table A2.5.

Further details of the relationship between predictors and religious variables can be gained by examining, firstly, the discriminant function scores

for each category of each predictor and, secondly, for each predictor, the correlations between the religious variables and the discriminant function. The data are given in tables A2 6 and A2 7 respectively and discussed below.

Gender

The gender of respondents exerts a small but significant impact on the range of religious variables From the discriminant function scores it is evident that, even after controlling for all other variables including workforce participation, women tend to have a more positive religious orientation than men. Examination of the correlations between religious variables and the discrimi nant function suggest that this pattern is true for nearly all religious variables, although it is most pronounced in the areas of orthodoxy of beliefs, prayer and general religious orientation The exception is respondents' willingness to die for their religious beliefs

Table A2.6 Relationship between Predictors and Canonical Variates — Manova Analysis of AVSS

Predictor	*CV Score*
Gender	
Fema e	+1.00
Male	−1 00
Age	
Jnder 19	.75
20–24	− 35
25–29	− 30
30-34	− 20
35 39	−.15
40 44	+.10
45–49	+ 05
50–54	+ 60
55–59	+ 65
Over 60	+ 55
Other	− 20
Country of Birth	
Austral a	−.10
Asia	+ 40
Canada	− 80
Greece	+1 30
Germany	−.60
Holland	− 50
Ita y	+ 50
NZ	−1 20
Yugoslavia	+.90
UK	· 20
Other	+ 30

Predictor	*CV Score*
State	
Queensland	· 25
NSW	30
V ctor a	+.20
Tasmania	+ 10
SA	+ 15
WA	+ 10
City Size	
Under 1,000 people	+ 70
1,000 4,999	− 20
5,000-9,999	+ 60
10,000 -24,999	−.60
25,000 49,000	− 40
Over 50,000	0
Capital City	− 10
Employment Status	
Full time	+ 10
Part time	− 40
Home Duties	+ 25
Non-worker	+ 05
Look ng for fu l-time work	− 40
Look ng for part time work	− 30
Retired	+ 60
Student	+ 10

Predictor	*CV Score*
Level of Education	
Some Primary	+ 95
Completed Primary	+.30
Some Secondary	+.35
Some Technical	+.15
School Certificate	+ 15
Fin shed Technical	+.30
Leav ng Cert ficate	+.10
H gher School Cert	−.15
Diploma	−.30
Some University	−.50
Now at Univers ty	−.70
Degree	− 65
Number in House	
1	− 30
2	− 25
3	+.30
4	+.25
5	−.05
6	+ 60
7	−.65
8	+ 60
9	−.50

Note For interpretation of Canonical variable scores see Table A2 9

Table A2.7 Correlations with Discriminant Function — Manova Analysis of AVSS

Religious Variables	*Predictors*							
	Gender	*Age*	*Country of Birth*	*State*	*City Size*	*Employed*	*Level of Education*	*Number in House*
Member of Church	+ 04	+ 33	+ 22	− 01	− 21	− 07	.32	+ 07
Voluntary Work for Church	+ 05	+ 29	− 18	− 21	− 05	−.31	− 15	+ 11
Attendance at Church	+ 22	+ 30	+ 43	− 50	−.13	−.15	−.24	+ 19
Prayer	+ [illegible]	+ [illegible]	+ 15	2[illegible]	37	20	− 27	27
Aware of Supernatural Power	+ 12	+ 20	+ 28	− 45	− 30	−.11	− 10	− 20
Experienced Powerful Spiritual Life Force	+ 18	+ 25	+ 05	− 24	06	+.15	− 04	− 23
Orthodox Christian Beliefs	+ 65	+ 12	+ 24	− 48	− 23	+ 18	+.23	+.27
Relevance of First Three Commandments	+ 30	+ 55	+ 39	− 31	− 12	+ 33	+ 35	+ 02
Relevance of Last Seven Commandments	+ 31	+ 43	− 10	− 19	+ 36	+ 57	+.13	+ 29
Confidence in Church	+ 40	+ 53	+ 40	− 21	+ 11	+ 32	+ 09	+ 29
Belief in a Personal God	+ 48	+ 26	+ 22	− 29	− 52	+ 16	− 09	− 18
Importance of God in Life	+ 51	+ 57	+ 60	− 62	−.22	+ 20	+ 34	+ 02
Satisfaction with Religious Life	+ 42	+ 50	+ 36	− 40	− 01	+ 21	−.03	− 28
A Religious Person	+ 44	+ 50	+ 19	− 28	− 15	+.13	+.19	+.18
Die for Religious Beliefs	− 27	+.03	+ 03	−.21	−.18	+.15	− 30	− 05
Shared Beliefs Important in Marriage	+ 03	+.53	+ 51	− 30	+.18	+ 15	−.00	+ 13
Teach Religious Beliefs at Home	+ 13	+ 43	+ 25	− 19	− 37	+ 06	− 08	+ 17

Age

Age is one of the most powerful predictors of religious orientation The older the respondent, the more likely they are to have a positive religious orientation Furthermore the effect holds for all the religious variables, again with the exception of one's willingness to die for religious beliefs Age differences appear to be more marked in the areas of prayer, relevance of the Ten Commandments, confidence in the church and overall religious orientation than in experiential and ritualistic dimensions The implications of this present significant challenges to the churches.

Country of Birth

This is another powerful predictor of religious orientation After adjustment for all other predictors, those born in Greece are most likely to have a positive

religious orientation, followed by those born in Yugoslavia, Italy and Asia At the other end of the spectrum are those born in English-speaking countries, particularly New Zealand This pattern is most marked in respondents' estimates of the importance of God in their lives, their perception of the importance of shared religious beliefs to a happy marriage, attendance at church and confidence in the church Several of the religious variables do not follow the overall pattern, particularly that relating to doing voluntary work for a church organisation.

State

The state of residence has some predictive power in this model Respondents, identical on all other predictors in the model, are more likely to have a positive religious orientation if they live in Queensland or New South Wales This holds for most of the religious variables, particularly the importance of God in one's life, attendance at church and orthodoxy of beliefs.

Population of Town or City of Residence

Another predictor based on community characteristics that has been retained in the model although it is rather difficult to interpret its effect It would appear from table A2 6 that the predictor is largely distinguishing between very small communities and those with populations of between 10,000 and 50,000 people. People in communities of under 1,000 people appear more likely to accept Christian ethics but less likely to have a positive religious orientation in most other aspects compared to their counterparts in larger regional centres In another aspect of the Manova Analysis not presented here there were suggestions that, all other aspects held constant, people in large cities of over 50,000 people are less likely to be actively involved with church life Such a result is largely consistent with the results of analysis of attendance based on church and census data

Employment Status

It is evident from this model that workforce participation is a significant predictor of religious orientation The canonical variable scores essentially discriminate between those who are retired or involved in home duties and those looking for work or employed part time After adjustment for all other effects, including gender differences, the former appear less likely to be actively involved in the church but more likely to accept conventional beliefs and ethics or have a generally religious orientation.

Level of Education

This is the most powerful predictor in the model. From table A2.6 one finds that, adjusted for all other predictors, increasing levels of education are likely

to imply reduced religious orientation This is in contrast to the church attendance patterns revealed in other parts of this study Inspection of the correlation coefficients in table A2 7 provides insights into this apparent discrepancy It is evident from this table that not all religious variables are operating in the same direction Education would appear to decrease the likelihood of people accepting traditional beliefs or the relevance of the Ten Commandments For those variables measuring ritualistic aspects of religious experience, including church attendance, the pattern would appear to operate in the opposite direction Thus we can conclude that increasing levels of education may at the same time work to increase levels of church attendance amongst some and erode orthodox beliefs and ethics amongst others.

Number Living in Household

Another of the powerful predictors in the model although, again, interpre tation is rather difficult There are some indications here that, compared to larger families, households of one or two are less likely to attend church or hold to orthodox beliefs, but more likely to claim experiences of the supernatural Such a hypothesis would require further investigation There are also indicators in other aspects of the Manova Analysis that larger households are more likely to have positive religious orientations.

APPENDIX 3: THE MCNAIR-ANDERSON SURVEY

3.1 VARIABLES AVAILABLE TO THE STUDY

Table 3.1 Variables used in the McNair-Anderson Survey

Attendance:
When did you last attend church, other than for a wedding, funeral or christening?
Less than a month ago/1-12 months/Over 12 months

Denomination
Anglican/Catholic/Presbyterian/Uniting or Methodist/ Other Christian/Other religion/No religion

State:
NSW/Victoria/Queensland/South Australia/Western Australia/Tasmania/ACT

Live in a Capital City?
Yes/No

Gender:
Male, Female

Age Groups:
Under 18/18-29 years/ 30-44 years/45-59 years/ over 60 years

Marital Status:
Single/ Married/ Divorced,Widowed or Separated

Size of Household:
Number of persons in household

Children Aged under 5 years:
Children Aged 5-12 years:
Children Aged 13-17 years:
Number of children in each age range in household

Youngest in Household
Under 5 years/5-12 years/ 13-17 years/ 18 years or over

Own Occupation:
Occupation of Main Income Earner:
Professional/senior management/clerical/technical or skilled/semi-skilled/unskilled

Own Occupational Status:
Occupational Status of Main Income Earner:
Upper/middle/lower

Level of Education:
Graduate/some tertiary/senior secondary school/ some secondary school/primary school only

Country of Birth:
Australia/UK and Ireland/NZ/Southern Europe/other

Table 3.1 — *Continued*

Own or Rent:
Own/rent

Changed Residence in last 2 Years:
Yes/no

Phone in Home
Yes/no

3.2 UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Table A3.2 Relationships between Church Attendance and Predictors

Predictor	*Correlation Coefficients*				
	Total sample	*Nominal Anglicans*	*Nominal Catholics*	*Nominal Uniting Methodist Presbyterians*	*Nominal other Christians*
Gender	.11	13	13	.13	N S
Age Groups	.08	08	14	.16	17
Marital Status	04	N S	N S	N S	13
Size of Household	10	N S	16	N S	.17
Children Aged 5–12 Years	.07	N S.	09	N S	.11
Children Aged 3–17 Years	07	N S	12	N.S.	.10
Youngest in Household	06	07	11	N S	11
Own Occupation	15	15	20	20	N S
Occupation of Main Income Earner	11	11	15	21	N S
Own Occupational Status	07	09	14	17	N S
Occupational Status of Main Income Earner	.07	09	14	17	N S
Level of Education	09	08	09	10	N S
Changed Residence	06	07	09	N S	.09
Own or Rent?	11	10	21	N S	09
Country of Birth	11	07	N S	08	13
Phone in Home	09	09	13	11	N S
Denomination	29				

Note These are Cramer's V Coefficients For direction of association see text Unless marked N S (not significant) each correlation was statistically significant at a 5% level or better

3.3 MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Multiple regression procedures have been used in the analysis of church attendance here to develop a model predicting church attendance rates amongst respondents in the McNair Anderson sample Just how powerful are the social and demographic variables in predicting church attendance rates? What are the effects of each variable after adjustment has been made for the effects of all others? How do these patterns vary between different denominational sub groups?

There are several different types of multiple regression analysis applicable to different situations The most straightforward is a standard 'Least Squares' regression in which arbitrary numeric scores are assigned to each of the attendance categories This method of analysis was employed here after some preliminary work on the data using this approach as well as a 'threshold regression' — where the attendance categories are assumed to be cut off points on an unobservable normal distribution — revealed only very minor differences The predictors included were those found to be significant in the univariate analysis described in section 3 2 and also in the preliminary regression analysis.

In order to explore the differences between the denominational groups, the procedure also looked at the interactions between denomination and each predictor. There are thus two stages to this analysis. The first stage (INTERACTION ANALYSIS) locates those predictors for which a significantly different relationship exists with church attendance rates for the different denominational groups The second stage (MODEL REDUCTION) is the construction of a reduced model of both predictors and interaction terms which are important in predicting church attendance.

Interaction Analysis

The interactions of each predictor and denomination were fitted, one at a time and their effect on church attendance tested, adjusted for all predictors Of these five were found to be significant at a 5 per cent level size of household, children in household aged between 13 and 17 years gender, respondents' occupation and whether they own or rent their houses We can conclude that these variables are those which exhibit very different relationships with church attendance for the different denominational groupings, after adjustment for the effects of all the social predictors.

Model Reduction

The model reduction procedure comprised two steps The first step resulted in a model which *included all predictors* and a group of interaction terms which were significantly predictive of church attendance after adjustment for the predictors as well as the other interaction terms. Due to problems of

multicollinearity between the interaction terms a process of backward elimination was not possible Therefore a forward model building approach was used to develop the reduced set of interactions The interaction terms which were retained in the model building process after this step were those between denomination and occupation, household size and whether respondents owned or rented their houses.

The second step of the model reduction process started with a model including the above interaction terms and all predictors and involved the *elimination of predictors* not significantly predictive of church attendance after adjustment for the effects of other predictors and interactions still in the model. The procedure for this step was a process of backwards elimination Predictors whose interactions are in this model must naturally be themselves retained in the reduced model The terms in the model are listed in table A3 3

Table A3.3 Predictors in Final Reduced Model

Predictor	*Degrees of Freedom*	*F Value*	*Probability P*	*Percent of Variance When Fitted Last*
Phone in House	1	9 2	003	0 18
Occupation of Main Income Earner	6	3 6	002	0 43
Gender	1	16 0	000	0 32
Age Groups	4	13 4	000	1 06
Level of Education	4	15 4	000	1 21
Country of Birth	3	5 5	001	0 32
Youngest in Household	1	6 5	028	0.13
Children aged 5-12 years	1	10 9	001	0 21
Denomination	3	190 4	000	11 24
Size of household	1	15 5	000	0 31
Own or Rent	1	55 3	000	1 09
Own Occupation	6	18 7	000	2 20
Interaction with Denomination				
— Size of Household		8 3	000	0 49
— Own or Rent		5 2	002	0 31
— Own Occupation		1 9	020	0 64

Percent of variance explained 20 1%

All the predictors in table A3 3 were significant even after adjustment for the effects of all the other terms None of the omitted predictors were significant when adjusted for the effects of the variables retained in the model The model is capable of predicting around 20 per cent of the variation in attendance rates The most powerful predictor is of course denomination Of the remaining predictors, occupation, level of education, age and housing tenure are the most powerful After adjustment for all other predictors attendance is higher

amongst those of higher socio economic status, the more educated, older people and home owners.

An important aspect of analysis of the McNair-Anderson data is the examination of denominational differences via interaction terms More detailed examination of the three interaction terms in the final reduced model suggests that, in the case of size of household, even after adjustment for all other predictors, members of larger Catholic and Baptist households are much more likely to be regular attenders than those in smaller households For Anglican and Uniting Methodist Presbyterian households there appears to be no significant relationship with household size Differences in church attendance rates between those who own or rent their houses is largely restricted to nominal Catholics where renters are poorer attenders at mass In the case of occupation, the interaction with denomination is rather more complex and is hard to interpret.

APPENDIX 4: OLDER SAMPLE SURVEY DATA

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF AVAILABLE DATA

In this study a range of older sample surveys has been used to analyse changes in patterns of church attendance over the last thirty years. Whilst it is not a substitute for a rigorous longitudinal study it is able to provide us with an indication of trends. These surveys all contain information on church attendance and various socio demographic variables. They come from a variety of sources as described below:

1 Roy Morgan Research Centre

Two surveys have been used from Roy Morgan Research Centre. They are national samples taken in early 1960 and late 1961 and include 1357 and 1813 respondents respectively.

Whilst Roy Morgan did carry out similar surveys after 1966, the original data tapes have not been available to this study. Where published print-outs from more recent surveys are comparable, they have been included in analysis.

2 Australian Political Attitudes Surveys

Two such surveys were carried out in 1967 and 1979 by Donald Aitkin. They surveyed a range of issues connected with politics, national issues and values. As part of these surveys respondents were asked about religious background and church attendance. The surveys were national samples of 2054 and 2016 persons respectively. The Northern Territory and the ACT were not included.

3 Age Poll

One poll carried out by the Australian Sales Research Bureau for *The Age* newspaper has been used here. Carried out in 1973, it is a national sample including the ACT and contains 1952 persons.

4 Australian Gallup Polls (McNair-Anderson)

Polls taken in 1976 and December 1980 have been used alongside the 1983–4 surveys. They sample adults over 16 years of age from all states except the Northern Territory. The 1976 sample is 2004 persons whilst 2120 persons completed the 1980 survey.

Computer tapes for each survey were supplied by the Social Science Data Archives of the Australian National University.

In analysing these surveys, great care was taken to create comparable categories for all predictors. Where this has not been possible for a survey, it

has been omitted from analysis. Small discrepancies in categories between surveys, different sampling methods or interview techniques mean that one must be cautious with these results, seeing them as a general guide to trends.

In order to create similar measures of church attendance in each survey a further adjustment has had to be made. In the 'Political Attitude' and 'Age' polls the attendance question was not asked of those who, in the prior question of religious denomination, had claimed no religion or had refused to answer. In other surveys church attendance rates were asked of all respondents. For the 'Age' and 'Political Attitudes' surveys it was assumed that those claiming no religion or refusing to answer would also be infrequent attenders.

In order to gain as accurate an estimate of attendance rates as possible, attendance rates were calculated first for each of the major religious groupings. The results of the nearest Commonwealth Census on the religious affiliation of Australian adults were then used to determine the relative proportions of each grouping in the population. Total attendance estimates were then calculated. In this way it was possible to minimise an important source of possible sampling error — denominational bias within the samples. This was not, however, possible in cases where further breakdowns were required such as gender or age differences.

4.2 THE 'RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA' SURVEY

This survey was carried out by Hans Mol in 1966, although its findings were only published five years later (Mol 1971). It contained 1187 respondents drawn from New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. The section of the survey in use here was filled out by an adult member of the household on behalf of all other household members.

In order to test the relative effects on church attendance of various predictors, correlation coefficients were calculated for each. They are shown below in table A4.1. These correlations are Cramer's V Coefficients for a dichotomous split of respondents into regular and non regular attenders. Regular attenders are defined as those attending church once a month or more regularly. The coefficients have been calculated on the basis of data in Mol's 'Religion in Australia' (1971).

The basic socio-demographic predictors all have significant effects on church attendance rates. Denomination is a powerful predictor of church attendance largely due to the attendance differences between Catholics and non Catholic samples. For the non Catholic sample, the correlation between attendance and denomination is of the same order as, and sometimes smaller than, that between attendance and occupation or age.

Table A4.1 Correlations with Church Attendance — The 'Religion in Australia' Survey, 1966

Predictor	*Notes on categories*	*Correlation with church attendance*
Gender		
— Anglicans		08
— Catholics		08
— Presbyterians		.16
Age	0-4 years/5-9 years/ 10-14 years/15-19 years/ 20-24 years/25-39 years/ 40-59 years/Over 60 years	24
Occupation	Upper/middle/lower - second	.15
— Anglicans	grouping (Mo 1979, 89)	18
— Catholics		21
— Presbyterians		19
— Other		22
Denomination		.44
— Non-Catholic sample		.19

Note *All correlations are statistically significant at a level of 5% or better. Coefficients are Cramer's V Coefficients*

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PETER KALDOR was commissioned by the Uniting Church Board of Mission to research church life in Australia. Prior to the undertaking of this five-year task he was involved in research projects into various aspects of social politic, welfare provision, community development, and the churches in Australian society. The author of *A Gulf Too Deep* and an editor of *Green Shoots in the Concrete: Towards a More Sensitive Christian Presence in Our Cities*, he holds a post-graduate degree in urban studies, is a member of the Board of Christian Research Association, and is actively involved in local ministry groups including Scaffolding, a network of churches in urban areas. Peter and Sue Kaldor live in the inner city of Sydney with their daughter, Jodie.